"DON'T LOOK NOW"

by
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SECOND DRAFT

1. INT. SUMMER COTTAGE. DAY.

JOHN BAXTER is working at the desk in his study. The room is lined with books, a cluttered, obsessive room with a low ceiling and the litter of a dedicated mind. The sun streams brightly through the narrow windows, disturbing the dusty tomes and illuminating the darkest corners of the room.

The CAMERA TRACKS IN on JOHN who is peering at a colour transparency of a stained glass window. His desk is covered with pieces of stained glass and he moves the pieces like bits of a jigsaw puzzle, checking them against the transparency. He is wholly absorbed in his work when quite suddenly and for no apparent reason he stiffens and looks up.

He stands slowly, looking about, as if troubled by some half-recalled memory of unpleasant things.
He walks to the door.

2. INT. PASSAGE OF COTTAGE. DAY.

JOHN walks down the stone-flagged passageway, his pace increasing.

3. INT. KITCHEN OF COTTAGE. DAY.

LAURA BAXTER is preparing a meal, washing vegetables. She looks up, smiling, as JOHN enters and crosses the room making for the back door.

LAURA
What's the matter, darling?

JOHN
[redacted]. [redacted].
Nothing.

The screen door slams behind him.

4. EXTERIOR. PATHWAY BEHIND COTTAGE. DAY.

JOHN is running now and running hard. The path leads downhill through a green forest of trees. The sunlight dapples the dry earth. JOHN's footsteps and his breathing are the only sounds until a sudden gust of wind makes the trees stir and sigh. And over that sound comes the cry of a boy, the crying rising with the wind.

[redacted] (CRY)

[redacted]! [redacted]!

The sharp fear in the child's voice is clear. JOHN runs even faster, gasping for breath, stumbling over a root, righting himself and running on.

JOHNNIE, his son, appears running up the path towards him. JOHNNIE is still sobbing. He is beyond words, his body wracked with fear + crying.

[redacted]

[redacted]! [redacted]!

JOHN doesn't even hesitate by the boy but runs on, straining against the limits of his body.

5. EXT. LAKE SHORE BY COTTAGE. DAY.

JOHN rounds a bend in the path and dashes down to the pebbly shore of the lake. He stumbles onto the little broken wooden jetty, the certainty of tragedy caught in his eyes.

JOHN's P.O.V. The CAMERA ZOOMS slowly to a figure in the water about thirty yards from the jetty. It is the body of a child. She is motionless in the water, face down. Bright red waterwings, now deflated, make a red stain against the dark water of the lake. They move faintly with the ripples to give the impression of the wings of a bird or of an angel.

HIGH ANGLE. JOHN has plunged into the water and swims towards the tiny broken figure. But the distance seems enormous, the effort is utterly futile. The two figures are the only features on the dark background of water. The

EXT. LAKE SHORE BY COTTAGE COTTAGE. DAY. contd.

CHILD a tiny bundle of white skin and red plastic waterwings. The father shrouded in the white foam of water as he flails towards his dead daughter.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

TITLES SEQUENCE.
AS TITLES END

DISSOLVE TO:

6. EXT. TORCELLO, VENICE. DAY.

LAURA is at an outside table in a cheerful Venetian restaurant. She is with JOHN, her husband and friend. The scars of tragedy are still visible in the tautness of her smile. But at least the effort is genuine. The muffled vagueness that is a consequence of emotional shock still clouds LAURA's demeanour. But at least her husband has managed to penetrate the veil.

JOHN is good looking and slightly older than LAURA. His eyes smile a great deal and they are laughing now.

JOHN
Don't look now. But we're being [redacted] watched.

LAURA looks about to right and left.

JOHN
No. Behind you. A couple of old women. I think they're trying to hypnotize me.

LAURA drops her napkin and under the pretext of picking it up she looks.

HER P.O.V. Two tweedy SISTERS sit at a far table. They look preposterously masculine in their neatly buttoned shirt and tie sets, severe tweed jackets and short haircuts. The SHORTER of the two is staring directly at them with pale blue eyes. The TALLER one looks away, says something and the short one averts her eyes.

EXT. TORCELLO, VENICE. DAY. contd.

LAURA suppresses a giggle as she turns back to JOHN.

LAURA

They're not old women at all.
They're male brothers in drag.

LAURA laughs and JOHN joins her, his hand sneaking out to touch her arm.

JOHN

They're criminals doing Europe.
They change clothes and sex at
each stop to throw Interpol off
the track. Today Venice and they're
ladies. Tomorrow Florence and they're
men again.

LAURA is laughing openly now. JOHN affects concern.

JOHN

Shouldn't you at least pretend
to choke?

Then he plays the stand-up comic.

JOHN

I've heard about sex changes,
but put it this way...and then
put it that way...and then put
it this way again....

JOHN watches her happily, kindly. He waits for her laughter to subside.

JOHN

It's good to hear you laugh again.

LAURA closes down.

JOHN

You see? You really forgot for
a minute there. And now you want

EXT. TORCELLO, VENICE, DAY. contd.

JOHN (contd)
to feel guilty at having forgotten.

LAURA
Change the subject John.

JOHN waves helplessly.

JOHN
Let yourself go, Laura.

LAURA forces a change in the subject, but the mood has been broken altogether.

LAURA
You know what I think they are? Retired schoolmistresses from Australia. They inherited a handy little sum from sister Lil that ran a hotel in Adelaide. They're doing Europe in three months including a day trip to old dad's grave in Bradford, then back to Kangaroo Creek in good old Australia

JOHN is impressed by his wife's feat.

JOHN
All good. But it still doesn't answer the question.

LAURA looks up sharply at him.

JOHN
Are they women? Or do they have 23% fewer cavities?

LAURA relaxes.

LAURA
We may be about to find out.

EXT. TORCELLO, VENICE, DAY. contd.

HER P.O.V. The two SISTERS have stood up and a WAITER is pointing out the toilets to them. The SISTERS start wending their way between the tables.

LAURA

Watch closely. If they automatically make for the men's room and then remember they're in disguise - we'll know.

THEIR P.O.V. The SISTERS move suddenly towards their table, approaching slowly with measured tread. They come nearer to the camera never blinking, never altering pace. They both pause as they pass JOHN and LAURA's table.

LAURA shifts her chair to permit them passage. One of the SISTERS, the tall one, gives a gracious little smile of thanks but the other stares down with huge, hypnotic blue eyes that never blink. Then they move on.

LAURA leans forward, suppressing a grin.

LAURA

It can't be real.

JOHN

What can't?

LAURA

The hair. It must be wigs.

JOHN

I didn't really notice. I was looking at those eyes. Did you...

LAURA

Oh John you're [redacted] a rotten detective. They both had moustaches and wigs. And all you saw were the eyes...

She gives a grunt of satisfaction.

EXT. TORCELLO. VENICE. DAY. contd.

LAURA

Aha!

LAURA stands up.

JOHN

What are you doing?

LAURA

I'm going to investigate further my dear Watson.

She turns to him conspiratorially.

LAURA

I better not laugh, that's all.

Then she is gone. JOHN leans back, taking out a cigarette and watches her follow the SISTERS into the ladies room. He speaks to himself with a certain fervour.

JOHN

Oh yes you must.

7. INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY. DAY.

Whiteness of the clinical room. Through the window LAURA, dark and hunched, waiting in the car. She stares ahead, transfixed and empty, her face pale and drained. JOHN turns away from the window to the DOCTOR who is sitting at his desk, his head bowed over some papers.
With his head still bowed the DOCTOR takes off his glasses, puts them in his top pocket, rubs his eyes and looks up. His eyes are pale blue and rheumy.

DOCTOR

Give her time, give her time.
Soon she'll turn to you or your son Johnnie is it?

JOHN turns slowly to look back at LAURA. She hasn't moved. Still hunched, withdrawn.

INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY. DAY. contd.

DOCTOR

You'll have other children. She'll find the strength from somewhere. Human nature's still the finest medicine of them all. And time the great healer.

CUT BACK TO:

8. EXT. TORCELLO RESTAURANT, VENICE. DAY.

JOHN is suddenly aware of the WAITER hovering.

JOHN

Let's you and me arrange a little surprise. Have you got the wine list?

The WAITER offers it.

9. INT. WOMEN'S WASHROOM. DAY.

The room is rather large - rather pretentious for its function. Mirrors above washbasins run down one wall. There are four of them.

An old CRONE sits on a chair guarding her tips and ignoring the small activity in the room.
LAURA washes her hands, watching the TWO WOMEN at the far basin. The taller of the two is very carefully putting lipstick on the short one's lips. It is like a child being tended by its mother. As the operation ends the tall SISTER sees LAURA, stumbles momentarily and murmurs something to her SISTER. The SISTER's great blue eyes swivel towards LAURA - who looks away quickly. LAURA hastily dries her hands on the little towel provided. She checks her make-up and is about to leave when she is startled by the voice of the taller SISTER, now standing right next to her.

INT. WOMEN'S WASHROOM, DAY. contd.

WENDY

I hope you won't think us rude.....

LAURA

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to stare...

The SISTER'S accent is heavily Scottish with the lugubrious heaviness of the East Coast.

WENDY

My sister is blind. You don't mind if she talks to you?

LAURA moves fractionally backwards as the shorter SISTER, HEATHER, stretches a gnarled hand out and touches LAURA's sleeve.

LAURA

No, I...of course not. Hello.

HEATHER makes no response. But her hand moves slowly up LAURA8s arm. Like a spider on the move. There is an uncanny stillness about her. LAURA has to force herself not to react by retreating. When HEATHER speaks, quite suddenly, her voice is low and controlled.

HEATHER

You're sad, you're so sad and there's no need to be.

WENDY

My sister is psychic.

LAURA

I'm sorry?

WENDY

She sees things....

LAURA instictively looks at the staring, blue, blind eyes.

WENDY

When God took her sight....

INT. WOMEN'S WASHROOM. DAY. contd.

WENDY (contd.)
he gave her a real second sight.

HEATHER
She wants you to know. I have seen her and she wants you to know...she is happy.

LAURA is suddenly trapped, appalled and a little frightened.

LAURA
What?

HEATHER
I saw your little girl. Sitting between you and your husband. She was laughing. Yes! She is with you...with you, my dear and laughing!

HEATHER suddenly seems to stare at a point on the wall about three feet from LAURA.

There is nothing there but cracks on the tiled wall. But there is a SOUND which grows: The sound of a wind and above the sound of the wind, is the SOUND of a CHILD laughing.... happy, contented, inner-directed laughter. It rises and swells and echoes emptily away again and in a moment it is gone.

LAURA has heard nothing. The CRONE has heard nothing. WENDY has heard nothing.

But HEATHER is beaming at the phantom emptiness.

HEATHER
She's wearing a little blue dress. With a paisley pattern.

LAURA (gasps)
Christine!

HEATHER
Oh but she's laughing, laughing. Happy as can be.

INT. WOMEN'S WASHROOM. DAY. contd.

LAURA's eyes water like twin fountains, quite suddenly and without any crying reaction. Tears just stream. WENDY draws her SISTER back a pace.

WENDY

Be still Heather. Let her sit down a while.

WENDY fusses in her handbag and produces a handkerchief which she offers LAURA.

HEATHER

Is she...is Christine....dead?

LAURA nods and whispers "yes". HEATHER sighs.

HEATHER

Yes...I thought so...but she wants you to know, to know that she is happy. Not to grieve any longer.

HEATHER looks back at the empty space of the wall. But there is nothing there. She puts out a hand to comfort LAURA.

HEATHER

LAURA dabs at her eyes, trying to regain control, trying to understand what's happened.

LAURA

Who are you? Who <u>are</u> you?

CUT TO:

10. EXT. TORCELLO RESTAURANT. DAY.

JOHN watches as the WAITER arrives with an ice-bucket and a half-magnum of Asti Spumante. JOHN gestures the ice-bucket to be put directly in front of LAURA's place. Then he takes the small vase of roses and puts them in the ice-bucket. It's a little surprise gift.

EXT. TORCELLO RESTAURANT. DAY. contd.

The WAITER bows and retreats. JOHN looks towards the lavatory door in faint irritation. It's taking a long time. The ice in the ice-bucket glistens.

11. INT. WOMEN'S WASHROOM. DAY.

The CRONE is now interested in the strange trio and watches without embarrassment.
LAURA is standing with her back against the tiled wall, her eyes half closed and the pallor of illness on her face. WENDY is administering smelling salts kindly. HEATHER's hands move gently over LAURA's face.

HEATHER

Oh you're very like her. The forehead.....the eyes....

WENDY

Is that better?

She removes the smelling salts. LAURA nods slowly.

HEATHER walks across to the CRONE and now produces a coin which she holds up.

HEATHER

Is this too much?

WENDY peers

WENDY

That's all right.

HEATHER

I can't tell with this foreign money.

The two SISTERS start to leave. LAURA remains standing against the wall

WENDY

Well - goodbye Mrs... Mrs...?

LAURA

Baxter. Laura Baxter.

INT. WOMEN'S WASHROOM. DAY. contd.

She turns her head and looks at the SISTERS, her voice strangely remote almost disinterested, yet seeking confirmation.

LAURA

You really saw her?

HEATHER stares back in a long pause before replying.

HEATHER

She was there. She was there.

the ambivalence of her meaning, it almost deliberately thwarts

12. EXT. TORCELLO RESTAURANT. DAY.

The ice in the ice-bucket has turned to water and the roses float limply on the surface. Time has passed and JOHN is now really agitated. He half rises from his chair, but sinks back as he sees the two SISTERS come out of the washroom; pay the bill at the desk, and walk out of the restaurant.

The WAITER comes up and hovers questioningly. The CAMERA MOVES PAST HIM and TRACKS IN VERY SLOWLY across the restaurant to LAURA who has just come out of the washroom door. She pauses by the door, gathering strength perhaps. But her face is a mask. Then she sets out across the room. She sits at the table without seeing the gift in the ice-bucket.

JOHN

They were women after all, right?

LAURA

What?

JOHN

Your Australian school-mistresses.
They just left.

JOHN realises there is something quite different about his wife.

JOHN (contd)

Are you all right? I bought you a present. Some Asti.

EXT. TORCELLO RESTAURANT. DAY. contd.

LAURA starts to stand up.

LAURA

I have to stand up...John....
John!

The sound of wind howling and a child's voice laughing, laughing. Building to a crescendo as LAURA staggers and starts to fall. JOHN lunges across the table to catch her as she does so. The SOUND stops abruptly.
LAURA is sprawled unconscious on the floor of the restaurant.

CUT TO:

13. EXT. OUTSIDE RESTAURANT AT TORCELLO. DAY.

A small cluster of incurious and curious TOURISTS watch as LAURA is carried on a stretcher into the waiting ambulance boat. The white and red plastic of the ambulance boat's cover is like a stain on the beauty of the scene.
JOHN is helped onto the boat beside his wife. In moments the amulance boat pulls out, a strange high-pitched whine that is its siren bleats out across the water as the boat speeds towards Venice.

14. INT. AMBULANCE BOAT. DAY.

LAURA's face is ashen grey. JOHN sits on one side of her, touching her face with his hand.
On the other side of her sits the ambulance ORDERLY in a white coat. He has one hand on LAURA's pulse, the other holds his watch. His head is bent down in concentration.
JOHN watches, intently.

Finally the ORDERLY slips the watch back in his pocket and lowers LAURA's hand back to her side. With his head still bowed the ORDERLY takes off his glasses, puts them in his top pocket, rubs his eyes and looks up. His eyes are pale and rheumy.
JOHN starts at the fractional moment of deja vu.

ORDERLY

Il polso non e forte.

JOHN looks up, suddenly fearful.

JOHN

What?

The ORDERLY touches his heart.

ORDERLY

Il polso.

But JOHN doesn't understand. The ORDERLY shakes his head, not worth the effort. The ever-present wall of non-communication.

INT. AMBULANCE BOAT. DAY. contd.

[redacted]

15. INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM. DAY.

Benches run along the walls. JOHN sits with one or two others waiting. The sudden silence is a strong contrast to the roar of the boats engines.

Rapid footsteps from the corridor outside. A dozen heads look up expectantly.
The door opens and a NURSE looks in.

NURSE

Signor Baxter?

JOHN gets to his feet, stubbing out his cigarette.

16. INT. HOSPITAL WARD. DAY.

As the NURSE holds the door open for him to go in, JOHN stares about the ward in surprise.
All the beds he can see are occupied by CHILDREN. The laughter and chatter and noise of their games dies away as JOHN walks down the centre of the ward towards the only bed with screens round it.
By the time they reach it, the ward is in silence.
The CHILD in the next bed stares at JOHN with huge unblinking eyes.
The NURSE gives a smile of encouragement and pulls one of the screens to one side so that JOHN can enter.
LAURA is lying on her back, but is awake. She smiles when JOHN comes in.

LAURA

There's nothing but children out there.

JOHN

I know. This hospital was the nearest....

LAURA

I've been listening to them.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD. DAY. CONT'D.

JOHN

[redacted].

There is a [redacted] pause, [redacted],

[redacted].

JOHN takes LAURA's hand gently. They are very glad to see each other. They do not speak. Hospital noises clatter in the background, [redacted].

Finally JOHN speaks softly.

JOHN

How are you feeling, [redacted]?

LAURA seems to be considering her answer carefully, as if she had to estimate her condition before reporting it.

LAURA

Wonderful. Just fine.
I feel just wonderful.

JOHN patently disbelieves her.

JOHN

I talked with the doctor.
He said you just....collapsed.

LAURA

John....

She takes his hand, holding his attention.

LAURA

Christine....is still with us.

C.U. JOHN holds himself in check. He was prepared for her mind to be confused.

JOHN

No, darling, Christine is dead

LAURA (shakes her head)

I know, I know that. I mean...
those two old sisters, the
reason they kept staring at us
is they could see Christine.
And she was laughing.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD. DAY. contd.

JOHN is silent because he doesn't know what to say.

LAURA
The blind one - she's the one who saw - even described Christiné's little blue dress. The paisley pattern....

JOHN closes his eyes to shut it all out. Laura reaches out to him.

[redacted]

[redacted]
You don't believe me, do you? You think I'm making it up....

JOHN
No. I...I believe you. But you collapsed, darling, you've had a shock. I don't know what those women said.....

LAURA
John! [redacted]

[redacted]

I'm all right now. [redacted]

[redacted] For the first time in all these weeks. Suddenly it's lifted. I don't need pills. Or sympathy. And I'm not going crazy.

She is radiant with sincerity and happiness. There is no denying the speed or efficacy of her recovery.

JOHN
I know you're not. I didn't say you were.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD. DAY. contd.

LAURA

No. But you were wearing the same face you wear for crazy [redacted] old Aunt Emily.

JOHN grins suddenly.

JOHN

And I'll put it on again for those crazy [redacted] old sisters if I see them.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

There is a calm intensity to her words.

LAURA

The whole thing's over, John. And I feel much better. Isn't that something to be glad for?

JOHN looks at her.

FLASH SHOT: LAURA holding the dead child by the lakeside. She is grey and shattered.

JOHN's face melts in a smile of real relief.

JOHN

Something to be very glad for.

They look at each other for a moment. Then LAURA throws herself into his arms. She is radiant.

17. EXT. GRAND CANAL. DAY.

That special pink light of evening is starting to paint the tops of the buildings. The water is darker with the setting sun.

The lights strung across the restaurants are on, but not yet competing with the setting sun. The usual chugging, gliding, thumping, chuffing of the different boats fills the air.

EXT. GRAND CANAL.DAY. contd.

A vaporetto.

JOHN and LAURA sit in the open part of the vaporetto.

[redacted]

[redacted].

JOHN is watching her carefully.

LAURA

[redacted]

I fainted. People do it all the time.

JOHN

Hm.

LAURA

I'm fine.

To prove it, she gets up and doubles round the tiny deck, swinging her arms like a windmill. The other passengers stare at her as if she is insane.

JOHN

Oh all right sit down, I believe you.

She sits down beside him and kisses him on the cheek. He can't resist smiling.

JOHN

Just be careful who you go to the CAN [redacted] with in future.

LAURA

I will.

JOHN turns to see where they are.

JOHN

Look. I wanted you to see that.....

EXT. GRAND CANAL. DAY. contd.

He points to a beautifully restored palazzo, its colours glistening, the marble columns gleaming, as if they had been put up yesterday. The mooring poles are painted in brilliant gold and blue. It stands in stark contrast to the building on either side,

JOHN
There. You see it can be done. Mike Leverett did that with a grant from the Ford Foundation.

There is a pause.

LAURA
John - can we go into St. Mark's?

JOHN
What for? You've seen it.

LAURA
I want to say a prayer, you heathen bastard.

He grins. It is obviously an old argument.

JOHN
What's the matter with here? You always say God is everywhere.

LAURA
This is not a consecrated motor boat.

She sits back in triumph.

— INSERT — X 20A

18. INT. ST. MARK'S CATHEDRAL. DAY.

It is a quiet, cool and dark place. But the bright sunlight outside throws patches of vivid colour from the stain glass windows onto the mosaics which cover much of the walls.

JOHN stands beside a mosaic studying it with intent professional interest. With the back of a pen he taps at one of the coloured mosaic stones. In an instant one

INSERT. 20A

EXT. BACK STREET, VENICE. DAY.

JOHN and LAURA turn a corner to find the little street is roped off. Three uniformed POLICE stand on duty outside a dingy house half way down the street. A small cluster of ONLOOKERS stand by the rope where another POLICEMAN is on duty. Two police boats ride at the mooring where a narrow canal abuts the street at the far end. Forensic experts are dusting doors and windows with fingerprint powder.

JOHN

Now what.

They look at the scene and approach the POLICEMAN slowly. The POLICEMAN waves his hands indicating 'no entry.'

JOHN

What's the matter?

The POLICEMAN utters a few words in Italian which mean nothing to JOHN or LAURA, but the POLICEMAN isn't going to amplify for any foreigners.

LAURA looks at the cluster of onlookers.

LAURA

What did he say?

OLD MAN

C'e stato un homicidio. Il quinto. ~~Nomicidii. Be quinciole omicida stracle~~. In quella casa la.

LAURA (gesturing a killing)

Homicidi?

The OLD MAN nods and looks back at the scene of the crime.

Two CHILDREN are copying LAURA's extravagant miming of murder and they laugh together.

JOHN takes her arm and they retreat back the way they came.

JOHN

Homicidis we can get in New York. Come on.

LAURA makes a face and they walk on round the corner.

Cont'. on 21.20.

INT. ST. MARK'S CATHEDRAL. DAY. contd.

of the UNIFORMED GUARDS has pounced and JOHN sheepishly tucks his pencil away and moves on.

LAURA is standing in the middle of the nave staring up at the cupola. Her face is calm and radiant as she looks at the beauty surrounding her. She is smiling in sheer delight. JOHN rejoins her and they move on slowly.

JOHN

I just got arrested in the course of my duty.

LAURA smiles.

LAURA

I thought you were restoring San Gregorio. This is St. Marco, in case you hadn't noticed.

JOHN

Seen one medieval mosaic and you've seen 'em all.

They stop at a little side chapel partitioned off from the main body of the church by exquisite grillework in iron. There are not many tourists in this side chapel, only one or two Italian WOMEN at prayer. One is lighting a votive candle to the Virgin. LAURA reads the sign pinned to the entrance of the side chapel: "THIS CHAPEL IS RESERVED FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO PRAY." It is in two other languages besides.

LAURA

Awful, isn't it. When they have to put up a reserved for prayer sign like that. What do they think the rest of a church is for?

JOHN bars the entrance to her.

JOHN

Excuse me, madam, but do you have a reservation?

INT. ST. MARK'S CATHEDRAL. DAY. contd.

LAURA

Several.

She goes past him, turning to speak as she enters the chapel.

LAURA

Give me some change.

JOHN

I thought God was meant to be free.

LAURA

Cheap, maybe - but free he's not. It's for a candle.

JOHN sighs, digging into his pocket and producing a handful of small bills and change. LAURA takes the coins.

LAURA

I'm going to light a candle for her. No - I'm going to light seven.

She starts towards the votive candles.
JOHN leans against the grillework, watching her.

LAURA is absorbed in lighting her candles. She lights one for every year of the child's life: seven in all. Behind JOHN, as he watches, a party of TOURISTS is being ushered round by a GUIDE. He stops behind JOHN at the chapel.

GUIDE

....grillework designed by Alfredo Pagnini and installed at the height of the republic in 1561. Note the flowers woven into the motif. All are emblems of famous families, who probably contributed to the cost....

INT. ST. MARK'S CATHEDRAL. DAY. contd.

The CAMERA is VERY TIGHT ON JOHN. His attention is riveted on LAURA in front of him. As the GUIDE starts to move away offscreen JOHN turns to look. He recoils in shock.

HEATHER's face is inches from his, staring with sightless eyes through the grillework, her hands moving over the tracery like a spider patrolling its web.

JOHN draws back, looking about for WENDY.

He sees her, looking for her sister, about twenty-five yards away down the nave.

JOHN drops down into a hassock and buries his head in prayer.
Behind him can be heard WENDY's footsteps, a muttered conversation in rolling Scots accents and then silence.
JOHN keeps his eyes tight shut. An ostrich. A hand touches him.
It is LAURA, smiling.

LAURA

Hypocrite.

He stares up into her face. Looks back over his shoulder.
The SISTERS have gone.
JOHN looks back up at LAURA and blinks.

CUT TO:

19. EXT. PIAZZA SAN MARCO. DAY.

The passeggiata is in full swing. Under the colonnades and around the square people are strolling, meeting, greeting and moving.
CAMERA ZOOMS IN to JOHN and LAURA who come running out of St. Mark's. JOHN's face is black as thunder. LAURA is laughing helplessly.

CUT TO:

20. EXT. VAPORETTO LANDING STAGE. DAY.

JOHN brushes aside the OFFICIAL and leaps aboard closely followed by LAURA as the vaporetto pulls out into the canal.

21. EXT. VAPORETTO. DAY.

JOHN looks at his watch again.

JOHN

We wouldn't even be in Venice if it wasn't for this job..... and I forget him!

LAURA

Darling - he needs you more than you need him. He'll wait.

JOHN

So much you know. There are at least two people in the world who could do the restoration as well as me.

He paces up and down.

JOHN

None are as cheap, ~~[illegible]~~ Maybe.

He paces some more.

JOHN

And Leverett and me are the only ones who supervise the sub-contracting.

He paces some more.

JOHN

And Leverett's in hospital with a stroke.

He is grinning. LAURA raises his arm above his head.

LAURA

The winner.

JOHN scowls.

JOHN

I'm still late - an hour late - and that's rude.

LAURA

Look - you restore churches, right? Tell him you were praying. Keeping the management happy with a little brown-nosing is good business practice.

JOHN grins at her.

JOHN

He'd never believe me.

CUT TO:

22. EXT. LANDING STAGE, LY HOTEL. DAY.

As JOHN and LAURA leap off the vaporetto and start up the steps towards their hotel three or four little URCHINS come scuttling across. One of them sells cheap dark glasses, one sells pennants, and two sell nothing at all.

URCHIN

Guide, signor? I show you San Marco, Doge's Palace, Basilica...?

But JOHN ignores the URCHIN and hastens up the steps. He is pulled up by LAURA

LAURA

John!

He stops and turns. LAURA is fumbling in her bag. But she has no money. JOHN goes back down the five or six steps with ill will and produces a coin which he gives to LAURA.

LAURA is kneeling down so that her face is level with the URCHIN. LAURA holds the money a moment. The URCHIN's wide dark eyes stare straight into hers.

LAURA

It's a little girl.

JOHN looks again, having thought it was a boy. Then LAURA gives the URCHIN the coin and immediately the girl whoops off to join her companions.

JOHN and LAURA scuttle up the steps and into the hotel.

EXT. LANDING STAGE BY SAN GREGORIO. DAY.

As JOHN and LAURA leap off the vaporetto and start up the steps towards the church, three little URCHINS come scuttling around them. One sells cheap dark glasses, one sells pennants and one sells nothing at all. But he smiles a lot.

LAURA (to JOHN)

Bluff it out. Apologize for being a few minutes early.

A WORKMAN is locking the main door of the church as they reach it. The WORKMAN puts the key into his tunic and starts away, turning to watch dumbly as LAURA and JOHN try the door to confirm it is locked.

JOHN

There's a side door.

They start to move round the walls of the church.

I've got a legitimate excuse for being late.

LAURA catches his arm suddenly and vehemently.

LAURA

No, John.

He looks at her, puzzled.

LAURA

I don't want him to know.

JOHN

Why the hell not?

LAURA

I just don't.

A voice calls out and they look to the square at the side of the church. Striding across is a tall, thin priest. He is Count ALBERTO RUSSO - or, indeed, Father Alberto Russo - and he is about forty, bleak dark eyes and the patrician sneer of his class has not been dulled by his vocation.

LAURA holds out her hand and ALBERTO bows over it perfunctorily as they meet in the middle of the square.

LAURA

Alberto, I'm so sorry. It was all my fault.

The other thing ALBERTO didn't get with his vocation was the virtue of patience. He is irascible and makes no attempt to conceal it.

ALBERTO

Well it is all too late now. The church is closed.

JOHN

I feel terrible, Alberto, please accept my apologies. . .

ALBERTO

Your apologies are not needed. We want only your opinion.

ALBERTO looks at his watch.

Well. Tomorrow then. You will have to come back tomorrow. I'm afraid I must depart now - a dinner - have you a boat?

ALBERTO is walking towards the landing stage. JOHN and LAURA almost have to run to keep up with him.

JOHN

We'll take the vaporetto back. By the way I had the sample of mastic you sent me analysed. It's really just a primitive cement with some china clay added. I think this may be your problem. The acidity in the air is breaking down the structure which in turn leads to loss of adhesion.

They stumble onto the landing stage as ALBERTO turns round quite abruptly.

ALBERTO

What time would be convenient to you tomorrow?

JOHN and LAURA exchange a fast glance as ALBERTO turns to summon his private launch. JOHN makes a face:'sonofabitch' and LAURA makes a face: 'screw him.'

JOHN

Well I hadn't realized the cupola was windowed on the East and West sides.

ALBERTO glances up at the church's dome to confirm this.

What I'd really like is to examine the mosaics when the first light is striking it at ~~right~~ an acute angles. That way you can spot irregularities without using a lateral theodolite.

ALBERTO

What time, then?

JOHN pauses.

JOHN

Six a.m. I guess not later than 6.15.

ALBERTO turns a shade darker.

I'm sorry. But if the bishop really wants. .

ALBERTO shrugs as if the matter were of no consequence.

ALBERTO

Very well. Six a.m.

He shakes hands briefly with LAURA. Nods to JOHN and steps onto his boat.

LAURA and JOHN stand on the landing stage and wave goodbye. Their wave is given the briefest acknowledgement.

LAURA (forcing smile, still)

Now there's a man who didn't go to the Vatican charm school.

JOHN

Wow!

LAURA

I thought he was a friend.

JOHN

Well at least I got the sonofabitch up at dawn tomorrow.

LAURA (smiles)
That was a goodie. But don't they all get up at five and say mass or something?

XXXJOHN
Alberto says mass when he feels like it. Which is about every third thursday in March. In a leap year.

LAURA
Wonder why he became a priest.

JOHN
Probably an old family tradition. Handed down from father to son.

LAURA laughs and they step forward as the vaporetto pulls in at the landing stage.

[redacted]

LAURA

[redacted] five and said mass or something.

JOHN

He says mass when he feels like it. Which is about every third Thursday in March. In a leap year.

LAURA

Wonder why he became a priest.

JOHN

Probably an old family tradition. Handed down from father to son.

LAURA giggles.

LAURA

I've got to admit - that dog collar wouldn't put me off a bit.

JOHN

I've got to tell you - that dog collar wouldn't put <u>him</u> off a bit either

The elevator door closes on them, as LAURA reaffirms herself to JOHN with a warm kiss.

24. <u>INT. BEDROOM. DAY.</u>

The sound of running water from the bathroom [redacted], LAURA is shrugging out of her dress and JOHN is trying to sponge some horror from his suit jacket.

LAURA

Leave it, darling. I'll do it in the morning.

He throws it down, smiling.

JOHN

All right. Shower or bath?

INT. BEDROOM. DAY. contd.

LAURA

Shower.

JOHN

Toss you for it.

He takes a coin from his trouser pocket and spins.

JOHN

Call.

LAURA

Tails.

He looks at the coin. It is heads.

JOHN

Tails it is.

She comes up to him and puts her arms round his neck.

LAURA

That was a lovely day.

JOHN

It still is. Painting the town, remember?

LAURA

I just want you to know.

(Pause)

Still got your paint brush?

She goes away from him and goes into the bathroom. He watches her smiling.

In an instant, there is the sound of a shower curtain being drawn. The sound of her humming comes to him, as he picks up a towel from the bed and follows her.

25. INT. BATHROOM. DAY.

JOHN ~~is in the shower, having a good time.~~ and LAURA are in the bath together. Their voices do not blend that well, but they are having a lovely time on some old time melody.

There is a knock on the bedroom door. They stop singing.

LAURA

Who the hell's that?

INT. BATHROOM DAY. contd.

Another knock.

LAURA

I know. It's the Goddammed martinis. Well, you go.

The shower is turned off. Silence.

JOHN

He must have a key, for Christ sake.

(he calls)

Come in!

Another knock.

JOHN

Come in!

And another.

JOHN

Hell.

He gets out of the bath, and heads for the door.

26. INT. BEDROOM. DAY.

John crosses the bedroom towards the door where his bath wrobe hangs, but the door opens before he gets to it and a pretty MAID enters with the martinis.

JOHN blanches & grabs at a bedspread to conceal his nakedness.

the maid puts the drinks down on the table for a tip. apologetically. She is transfixed

JOHN

Um...Oh...

He goes to his trousers and hunts for change. He finds some as LAURA's VOICE comes from the bathroom.

LAURA (O.S.)

What's going on?

JOHN

It's all right, it's just.....

He hands the MAID a couple of coins as LAURA emerges. She

INT. BEDROOM. DAY. contd.

gives a little yelp as she sees JOHN trying to keep his dignity and part with his change.
The MAID bobs and leaves.
JOHN pours the drinks.

LAURA

She was pretty.

She comes and puts her arms round his neck.

LAURA

But not off duty. It's been a long time.

JOHN

Have a drink.

LAURA

Why. Lie down. You're all wet.

She takes another towel and spreads it on the bed. He looks at her for a moment, then stretches out on the bed.
She takes a towel and starts drying him.
She dries his ears, his throat, his chest. It is a very sensuous process.
She drops her own towel, and lies beside him, her fingers running through his hair.
He looks at her.
She kisses him slowly.
He slides over on top of her.

LAURA

Welcome home.

FADE OVER:

The martini jug is empty.
They lie side by side, smoking quietly.

JOHN

We really ought to give it up.

LAURA stares at him.

LAURA

You're joking.

INT. BEDROOM. DAY. contd.

[redacted].

JOHN

I mean smoking.

LAURA

Oh.

JOHN rolls over to face her.

JOHN

What do you want to do. Hungry? Why don't we just eat downstairs and have an early night.

LAURA

No, love. I haven't been as happy as this since...since you know. I'm not going to end the day with that crowd or that food.

[redacted].

LAURA

[redacted]. I thought you wanted to paint the town.

JOHN

That was before you raped me.

LAURA

You....

She takes the pillow and beats him hard. He rolls out of bed, hitting the floor.

JOHN

I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

He picks up his shirt and starts dressing.

She rolls over and picks up a guide book. She thumbs through it, closes her eyes and stabs a finger, then looks

[redacted]

"[redacted]"

INT. BEDROOM DAY, contd.

[redacted]

She picks up another.

LAURA

[redacted] the Sagredo, [redacted]. Let's go to the Sagredo.

JOHN

Oh no - let's just take a chance on a bistro.

LAURA

(reading book)

The Sagredo has a star for food, and it has a little bird for atmosphere.

JOHN

Oh, honey. Let's just get on some clothes and walk until we find somewhere.

She sighs deeply.

LAURA

We'll get lost.

27. EXT. VENICE STREET. NIGHT.

They stand under a street lamp, which sheds inadequate light on the map over which they pore.

LAURA

Don't shout at me.

JOHN

I'm not shouting. But look. We're here. We've just come over that bridge.

EXT. VENICE STREET. NIGHT. contd.

LAURA

It could have been any of those bridges. Venice is full of them, in case you hadn't noticed.

JOHN

But there's only one Grand Canal. And we crossed it there.

He gets out a pencil.

JOHN

Look - we go down this alley, over that bridge, fork down that alley and we come out at the Church of San Zacariah.

LAURA

Maybe.

He takes her by the arm.

28. EXT. ALLEYWAY IN VENICE. NIGHT.

It is dark, shadowy, rather unpleasant. LAURA is walking well ahead of JOHN now and trying to take the initiative. Their footsteps echo.

LAURA mutters as she walks, head down.

LAURA

We're godamm well lost. I know it.

JOHN (from farther behind)

What?

LAURA

You are lost.

JOHN

Venice is the size of a postage stamp. You can't get lost on something that size.

EXT. ALLEYWAY IN VENICE. NIGHT. contd.

They walk on, separated by ten yards, each vaguely angry and amused by their predicament.

There seems to be no one else in the world. The darkness is heavy, the houses high, cutting out any light from the sky.

The canal beside them is dank, treacly and smelly. Ahead of them in the darkness is a 'T' junction of canals. The alleyway can go either way - one way across a little foot-bridge, the other way down an even narrower darker alley.

LAURA stops at the junction and waits for JOHN to catch up. He looks either way, peering for a street sign or even a decent light under which to study his map.

LAURA

Why don't we knock on somebody's door and ask?

JOHN (ignoring her)

I think I can see St. Mark's Down there. Look.

She squints into the darkness.

LAURA

It's too small for St. Mark's.

JOHN

Come up.

As he steps forward down the little alley his foot comes into soggy contact with a cardboard carton of garbage. It is wet and nasty.

JOHN

Oh Christ.

There is a squeak and a scuttle.

Three or four rats scuttle across the alley, their horrible eyes glinting. One swerves momentarily towards them. Then all four dive into the canal. A succession of little plops as they strike the water.

LAURA screams. Hard. JOHN grabs her. He's a little rattled too.

EXT. ALLEYWAY IN VENICE, NIGHT. contd.

JOHN

It's okay. Just some rats.

Venice is full of them.

He grins and holds her tightly against his shoulder.

JOHN

Don't tell the mayor I said so.

LAURA pulls away from him, a little recovered.

LAURA

That's all I needed. Rats.

She shivers at the spectacle of four rats swimming away across the limpid waters of the canal.

LAURA

Lead on, Marco Polo.

They move on down the alleyway together.

CUT TO:

29. EXT. CANAL BRIDGE. NIGHT.

JOHN swirls round at the sound of a door opening behind them. A WOMAN slops a bucket into the canal.

JOHN

Excuse me!

JOHN dashes forward.

The WOMAN sees him, gasps, and slams the door shut before he can get close enough.

LAURA shrugs at the futile episode and starts across the tiny bridge.

LAURA

I guess she Likes Harvard men.

LAURA crosses to the far side of the canal and studies the name plate on the bridge.

JOHN is looking at the name plate on his end of the bridge.

LAURA (calling across)

It's called the Ponte Giretto.

JOHN takes out his street map and starts looking. In the B.G. LAURA is moving into a little piazza just beyond the bridge.

EXT. CANAL BRIDGE. NIGHT. contd.

Suddenly from the first floor of one of the dark houses behind JOHN comes a truly terrifying scream. It is a strangled, muted, momentarily shrill scream of pure terror. It stops quite suddenly.

A shutter slams above JOHN. Then a door opens, throwing a dim light across the alley which runs off the bridge at an angle. It is completely obscured to LAURA's view. But JOHN can see down its entire dim length.

HIS P.O.V. Out of a doorway comes a little GIRL. Her rasping, terrified breath comes to him in the silence. But there is also the SOUND of wind - and a child moaning. An eerie cry.

Without glancing to the left or right the little GIRL dashes across the alleyway and down a couple of steps to a landing stage. With incredible agility she bounds over two boats, loosing the bow painter of the third and shoving it across the canal to make a bridge. The instant it hits the other side, the CHILD scrambles off it and is gone into the darkness of Venice.

The SOUND of her footsteps echo momentarily across the canal.

FLASH SHOT: The sound of JOHN's footsteps as he runs down the pathway to the lake. Over this sound the CAMERA ZOOMS violently towards the dead body in the water. His daughter - and the red plastic that strikes a chord of recognition. For the CHILD in Venice was wearing red. It is only a fragmentary moment.

JOHN blinks as if in disbelief at his own eyes. The whole thing is over in a moment. He folds the street map purposefully and turns to cross the bridge where LAURA is waiting, having come back up the alley.

LAURA watches him intently as he joins her.

LAURA

Was that screaming?

JOHN

What?

EXT. CANAL BRIDGE. NIGHT, contd.

LAURA

I heard a scream.

JOHN

Oh it was just...just an old drunk.

The incident is banished. LAURA gestures to the piazza beyond.

LAURA

I think I've found the real world again. Look.

They join hands and stride away from the bridge towards the piazza.

Down a right hand turning, the bright lights of a square shine towards them beckoningly.

They both with a single step head for it.

30. EXT. SQUARE. NIGHT.

They arrive and he throws his arms wide with relief.

JOHN

Voila! San Zaccaria.

LAURA

By the scenic route.

She gives an elaborate sight. He grins. The lights, the people are washing out the memories already.

JOHN

Come on. I think I'm going to get bombed tonight. This looks okay.

They move to a restaurant.

31. INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

It is gay, nearly full, candles, coloured lights, hubbub, perhaps a guitar.

They come in and gasp with the heat.

LAURA

Wow. That's better.

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT. contd.

A WAITER comes up, bowing, hustling.

JOHN

For two. And stick close.
I want to order a drink.

The WAITER smiles and guides them to a table, producing two huge menus as if by magic.
They sit down.

JOHN

Two very large campari soda.

LAURA

I can have garlic now.

She grins.

JOHN

What's that mean?

LAURA

Well, you were never much more than a once-a-day man.

JOHN is highly embarrassed.

JOHN

Please.

He looks around, but no one has heard.
LAURA leans across to him.

LAURA

Kiss me and I'll keep it secret.

JOHN laughs.

JOHN

Kiss me and I'll disprove you in public.

LAURA

That could be fun.

JOHN

No way.

They both take stock of the restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT. contd.

JOHN

What's this place called anyway?

LAURA looks at the menu and starts to laugh. She giggles and laughs, barely able to contain herself. JOHN picks up the menu and looks.

LAURA

The Sagredo!

JOHN tosses his menu down with a 'well I'll be damned' shrug The WAITER arrives with their drinks. JOHN holds his campar up and looks at her through the bubbles of soda.

JOHN

Here's to us.

He drinks without waiting for LAURA to join him. His eyes stray to the doorway of the restaurant.

HIS P.O.V. The two SISTERS have just entered. They fuss with removing their jackets and being shown sedately between the tables to a corner spot some five tables away from JOHN and LAURA's.

JOHN's face tightens.

LAURA

She must be very beautiful.

JOHN

What?

LAURA

Whoever came in. [redacted]. A blonde I suppose.

JOHN forces himself to relax.

JOHN

No, No, a brunette.

LAURA

Can I look.

JOHN (alarmed)

Not yet.

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT. contd.

LAURA isn't really that interested and continues studying the menu.

LAURA
This place is expensive.

JOHN
You may remember, those are the grounds on which we rejected it two hours ago.

LAURA
I could eat a horse.

She looks up at him and smiles.

LAURA
Sex always makes me hungry. Do you remember when we were....

She sees that JOHN's eyes are still upon the corner table.

LAURA
John....

He looks back at her apologetically. LAURA decides on a game.

LAURA
I'm going to give her the jealous wife stare. Watch this.

LAURA draws herself up and turns to give a frozen look across the restaurant.

LAURA's face changes from a moment of frozen hauteur to amazement, to delight and perplexity.

HER P.O.V. The SISTERS are themselves staring round the restaurant.

LAURA turns her back on them swiftly, undecided how to react.

LAURA
It's them! There wasn't any blonde.

JOHN nods resignedly. Watching for her full response and now LAURA's whole composure alters.

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT. contd.

LAURA

Oh I've got to go and have a word with them.

She turns round and waves towards them.

The sighted sister, WENDY, sees her and waves back, then turns to HEATHER and whispers something. The great sightless blue eyes come up and HEATHER waves vacantly towards her. LAURA half-stands in her seat.

LAURA

I won't be long, darling.

JOHN

~~Laura~~!

~~There is an imperative tone in JOHN'S command. LAURA sinks back into the chair, she speaks patiently.~~

~~LAURA~~

~~I'm just going to say hello.~~

~~Just to tell them how happy~~

~~I have been all day.~~

~~JOHN~~

Listen, Laura, they're going to drag you into something. Those old people have a way of pulling you into their net.....

~~LAURA~~

~~Pulling they could drag me into anything. I have much too strong~~

But Laura has gone before he can finish.

~~The waiter has come and is standing waiting for JOHN'S order.~~ He sinks back in his chair, watches a moment, then snaps his fingers irritably for the WAITER. While waiting, he reaches out and downs Laura's drink in one gulp.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT NIGHT. contd.

C.U. A gnarled old hand clutching a smooth young hand. It is HEATHER clinging to LAURA at the restaurant table, working her happiness through the gnarled bones of her old fingers.

HEATHER

I remember her hair. Light hair and silky soft. She tossed it as she laughed.

LAURA nods faintly at the remembered gesture.

Did she die suddenly.

The question jolts LAURA out of her recollection.

WENDY

Heather, you've no right to....

LAURA

No, that's all right.

WENDY subsides.

She was drowned. John had.....
we had let them play in the water ....
[redacted] ....

WENDY

Tragic, utterly tragic for you Mrs. Baxter.

LAURA

It's strange, you know. John seemed to get a.....warning. It was as if he knew something was [redacted]. He ran down to the lake. But it was too late.....

HEATHER is smiling.

HEATHER

Yes. Of course. Of course, he has the gift. That's why the child was trying to talk to him.

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT. contd.

HEATHER

Because - when I saw your little daughter - between you - it was your husband she was laughing and talking to.

LAURA

And not me?

HEATHER shakes her head.

HEATHER

He has the gift. Even if he doesn't know it. Even if he is resisting it.

HEATHER senses LAURA's disappointment - almost jealousy, of JOHN. He can see the daughter they have lost, she cannot.

HEATHER

Oh child - it's a curse as well as a gift.

There is a pause while HEATHER's hands roam the table for her wine.

WENDY

It comes and goes you see.

LAURA nods.

LAURA

You don't...you can't ever... contact people can you?

HEATHER (sharply)

No.

WENDY

We're often asked. She's really quite famous round Elgin.

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT. contd.

HEATHER

They all want a lot of mumbo-jumbo with ectoplasm and holding hands. Second sight is a gift from the good Lord who sees all things. I consider it an impertinence to call his creatures back from rest for our entertainment.

LAURA

It wouldn't be for my entertainment.

Silence. WENDY fusses. HEATHER thinks.

WENDY

Why not come back for coffee? After you've finished. Just for a little while.

LAURA

Oh thank you.

HEATHER

I make no promises.

LAURA reaches over and half hugs WENDY. JOHN has lined up five campari glasses in front of his plate as the WAITER delivers two more. The WAITER also removes his empty food plate and gives a look at LAURA as she takes in the import of the scene and sits down.

JOHN

I've been drinking your drinks as well as mine.

LAURA

Good. Did it help?

[redacted]

Stet

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT. contd.

JOHN

Did they.

LAURA

The words they used were 'he seems not too pleased.' They meant petulant child.

JOHN puts his drink on the table firmly.

JOHN

Well, I've eaten, I'm ready to go home.

LAURA

But I haven't.

JOHN

We came here to eat. What you did with your eating time was your affair. I'll leave you some cash if you like. The scampi is very good.

LAURA

John! Please!

JOHN

Well what do you expect me to do? Sit here grinning while I watch two old pathetic cranks pull you into their neurotic half-mad world of mumbo-jumbo.

LAURA smiles faintly.

LAURA

She disapproves of mumbo-jumbo too. They used the very word.

JOHN seems to have relented a little. He sits back.

LAURA

Give me a drink.

He signals the WAITER for another campari soda.

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT. contd.

JOHN

Well. What did they tell you?
The name of the next Derby winner?
Or did they ask for money this time?

LAURA

They were just happy to know we'd
been happy.

JOHN

Who's we?

LAURA

Oh John....

JOHN

I like nothing better than a
wife who[illegible] depression
is brought to a state of MADNESS
by two stargazers. Any man would
be happy with that.

The WAITER puts down the drink and LAURA sips at it thirstily.

LAURA

I fainted from shock. All right.
But after that - was this afternoon
[illegible] MADNESS ?

He says nothing.

LAURA

Did I act like a depressive?

He says nothing.

LAURA

I know I was cracking up,
darling. Even Doctor James
said a nervous breakdown was
possible. But that's all over.
You saw with your own eyes.
Look at me now. Christine is
dead. She isn't coming back

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT. contd.

LAURA (contd.)
any more. My daughter is gone. The child I loved more than myself is dead. You see? I can say that and comprehend it... and still not be upset by it.

She pauses. The weight of her evidence is overwhelming.

LAURA
John-darling-those old crones as you call them have done nothing. But I am whole again. They deserve your thanks, if you care about me at all.

There is a long silence JOHN pushes the menu across to her.

JOHN
I could eat another plate of scampi if you'd like something.

LAURA watches him a moment, then drops her head to the menu in confusion, to cover her tears, and in gratitude. JOHN touches her hair briefly and smiles.

CUT TO:

32. EXT. PIAZZA SAN ZACARIA, OUTSIDE RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

It has started to rain. A fine drizzle has given a silver sheen to the square. But the lights are bright and people hurry here and there. The rain gives a mystic quality heightening the buildings, making them somehow unreal. JOHN turns up his coat collar and gazes about, waiting for LAURA to come out of the restaurant.

She joins him, but as he starts off in one direction LAURA tugs at his sleeve to go in another direction. JOHN looks baffled.

LAURA (calls through the rain)
Coffee!

JOHN turns, staring at her.

EXT. PIAZZA SAN ZACARIA, OUTSIDE RESTAURANT. NIGHT. contd.

JOHN

What?

LAURA

Coffee. We're invited to have coffee.

JOHN pulls her into a doorway out of the rain. LAURA looks awkward and embarrassed, like a little girl who has to own up to breaking the china.

LAURA

The sisters. They wanted to meet you. I said we'd go for coffee... we don't have to stay long.

JOHN stares at her in amazement.

JOHN

Alternatively, we don't have to go at all.

LAURA

I'd like to.

As she speaks, she steps out of the doorway into the rain again. JOHN hesitates a moment. And in that moment a sudden bunch of street URCHINS come dashing up to LAURA, surrounding her, and holding up a tattered umbrella tied to a bamboo pole. They are laughing and cajoling her, holding out their hands for money and pinching her backside. JOHN wades in to intervene and the URCHINS relent momentarily.

JOHN

Move! Hey - get out of there!

URCHIN

Hun're lira umbrella, signor? No ge' wet.

LAURA's head is down and purpose resolved.

JOHN

Laura, you've been through a hell of a lot today. Let's not take any risks.

EXT. PIAZZA SAN ZACARIA, OUTSIDE RESTAURANT, NIGHT, contd.

LAURA

It's not far, John. We needn't stay long.

He is walking beside her now.

JOHN

It's raining....

LAURA

They offered you an umbrella.

On hearing the word the URCHINS surge forward again.

URCHINS

Umbrella? Si signorina! Hun're lira, please.

JOHN fumbles in his pocket and finds a coin. He flings it deliberately as far away as possible. Some of the URCHINS dash away to find it. But the umbrella URCHIN remains with them doggedly.

JOHN

For God's sake, Laura - you know what I'm getting at...I just think it's damn silly....

LAURA

I know what you're getting at. You still think I'm going out of my head and those old women are as crazy as I am!

JOHN

Well don't tell me they're plain folks from next door.

LAURA is peering at a piece of paper in her hand. Then she looks up at a street sign and turns the corner.

LAURA

John - darling - please. I'm going to see them because they said they might try and reach....Christine.

EXT. PIAZZA SAN ZACARIA, OUTSIDE RESTAURANT. NIGHT. contd.

JOHN now leaps forward and grabs her spinning her round. Even the umbrella URCHIN looks fearful at the sudden fury in his face.

JOHN

For Christ's sake! Half a dozen words with them sends you to hospital. Can you imagine what two hours will do?

Now LAURA is angry too. She breaks away from him and starts to run. The URCHIN runs with her, the umbrella waving uneasily. JOHN stands watching until finally LAURA looks up at a pension hotel and runs into the shelter of its doorway. She stands there looking back miserably. JOHN walks slowly towards her.

33. INT. DOORWAY OF PENSION. NIGHT.

The URCHIN holds out his hand, grinning, as JOHN reaches the doorway. JOHN ignores him and steps up to the shelter of the doorway.

LAURA

I'm all right, John. These women want to help me. To help us except you won't let yourself get involved.

JOHN

I don't need their help.

LAURA

Oh so that makes you not guilty all of a sudden.

JOHN

What?

LAURA

You're the one who said let the children swim by themselves aren't you? You're the one who told me you'd give your life in exchange for hers. Well....it's too late

INT. DOORWAY OF PENSION. NIGHT. contd.

LAURA (contd.)
for that. But at least she's trying to get in touch with you. Maybe to forgive.

JOHN's fury suddenly turns cold.

JOHN
You're not heading for coffee with those two. You're heading for a nervous breakdown! A couple of crazy women trying to make another crazy woman. Well - they can have their victim.

With a stifled sob, LAURA turns and runs into the pension. JOHN marches out of the doorway once more, into the rain.

34. EXT. STREET OUTSIDE PENSION. NIGHT.

JOHN storms off down the street. The URCHIN follows, scrambling to offer the shelter of his pathetic umbrella. The rain engulfs them.

35. INT. SISTERS' HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

LAURA is sobbing, trying to control herself, but still sobbing while HEATHER comforts her with a motherly arm. WENDY pours a tot of whisky from an old fashioned travelling flask. She puts it in front of LAURA's nose and LAURA gradually controls herself.

WENDY
Now you just drink that straight back. Scotland's finest. Malt whisky. No cheap alcohols added, just the pure grain of malt distilled into highland whisky.

LAURA sips at it.

HEATHER
You ran all the way here, child.

INT. SISTERS' HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. contd.

LAURA nods. But HEATHER can't see.

HEATHER

Did you?

LAURA

Yes.

HEATHER

Yes.

LAURA sips again.

HEATHER

You nodded the first time, did you?

HEATHER

It's easy to forget.

LAURA looks slowly round at HEATHER
There are tears streaming from the sightless blue eyes.

LAURA

Oh I'm sorry, I'm so sorry....

WENDY tut-tuts in the background.

WENDY

She's a regular tap. She can turn the waterworks on or off at the drop of a hat. Self-pity, that's all it is.

HEATHER wipes her eyes.

HEATHER

My emotions were stirred by this child's condition. Self-pity had nothing whatever to do with it.

WENDY replenishes LAURA's glass. HEATHER holds out her own empty glass on hearing the sound of pouring.

WENDY (to LAURA)

<u>This</u> is the inducement to her emotional condition.

She pours a tot.

INT. SISTERS' HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. contd.

HEATHER

I don't even like the stuff.

But she drinks it as if she did.

CUT TO:

36. EXT. VENICE STREET. NIGHT.

In LONG SHOT all that can be seen moving over a distant bridge is the brightly coloured umbrella. The rain still enshrouds the city. JOHN is walking slower now, his anger subsiding. Quite suddenly he stops in his tracks. The URCHIN has to dash back two paces to keep him covered. JOHN stares down into the boy's eyes. The URCHIN grins back, puzzled.

JOHN

I must be absolutely out of my head.

URCHIN

Signor?

JOHN

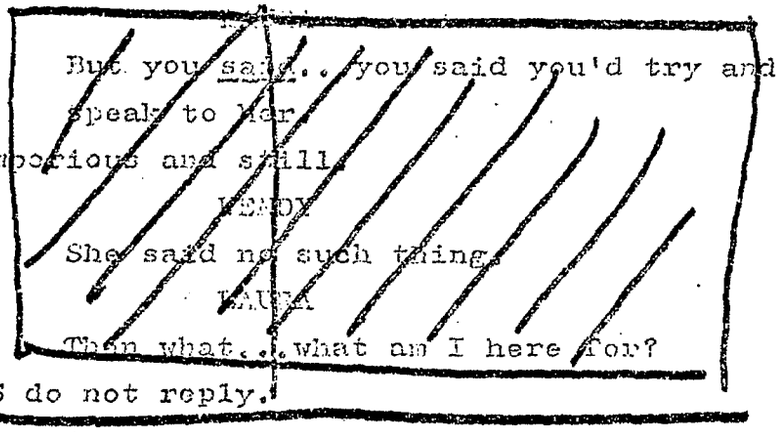
Leaving her with those...

JOHN stares into the darkness from whence he has come, then he looks down at the boy again. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out three notes. He starts to take one off- and then gives all three to the boy in a sudden gesture of compassion. Not waiting to be thanked JOHN dashes back on his footsteps, across the bridge, back towards the pension. The URCHIN looks at the vast amount of money in his hands, then he makes a gesture which is international and means simply 'you must be off your head'. That is the extent of his gratitude.

~~37. INT. SISTERS' ROOM IN VENICE. NIGHT.~~

~~They sit before the fire. The room is dimly lit by candles and~~

INT. SISTERS' ROOM IN HOTEL. NIGHT. contd.



But you said... you said you'd try and speak to her.

WENDY is imperious and still.

WENDY

She said no such thing.

LAURA

Then what...what am I here for?

The SISTERS do not reply.

38. EXT. OUTSIDE SISTERS' HOTEL. NIGHT.

JOHN stares up at the shuttered windows. Then he steps into the doorway and pushes tentatively at the front door. It opens inwards with a groan. JOHN enters quickly.

39. INT. HALLWAY. SISTERS' HOTEL. NIGHT.

There is a small desk with a light on, which serves for reception. But there is not a soul in the place. There is a bell which JOHN thumps. Nothing. He thumps it again. Still nothing.

He goes behind the desk and opens the guest book, running his fingers down the list. There are no room numbers against them. Anyway, he realises he doesn't know their names.

He closes the book again, and tries the bell once more. Nothing.

With great hesitancy, he makes his way to the bottom of the stairs and starts to climb.

40. INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

The corridor is dimly lit and the house is in absolute silence. The threadbare carpet muffles JOHN's footfalls. He reaches the first door and stops. He is about to knock, then realises the time, glancing at his watch. It is a little late to go knocking on the wrong door.

He bends down, trying to look in the keyhole. It is not the type you can see through. So he tries to listen.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR. NIGHT. contd.

A man's voice from the inside of the room, then a girlish giggle. Wrong room. He goes to the next.
He listens.
Suddenly the door next along the corridor bursts open and a large MAN appears from the bathroom wearing a dressing gown.
JOHN straightens and fumbles with his tie, moving away.
The MAN comes to the door at which he has just been listening, takes out a key and lets himself in. But he doesn't close it.
He just stands there, staring at JOHN with narrowed suspicious eyes.
JOHN smiles and nods. Then moves off down the corridor.
When he gets about ten yards further on, he stops and looks back.
The MAN is still staring at him.
JOHN takes a few paces more and discovers that there is nowhere for him to go, but back past the MAN.
The MAN tucks his head back into the room and calls a name.
There is a muttered consultation in Italian and an even bigger MAN appears in pyjamas.
JOHN reaches the top of the stairs when a powerful voice calls out behind him.

VOICE

Hey! Alto! Alto-la! Ladro!

JOHN pauses and looks back.

JOHN

I...I was looking for someone....

But the two large MEN start down the stairs after him. They mean business.
JOHN takes the better part of valor and dashes out the door.

41. EXT. OUTSIDE SISTERS' HOTEL. NIGHT.

JOHN ducks into an alleyway. The two MEN stand for a moment on the steps, then go back into the pension.
JOHN looks about.
Opposite the door of the pension is a small bar, still open.
He heads for it.

42. INT. BAR. NIGHT.

Only a few customers left. JOHN orders a drink and sits where he can see the door of the pension.

43. INT. SISTERS' HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

The atmosphere is electric. HEATHER is in a kind of trance. Her knuckles are white, gripping the chair, her breath comes in short moans. Her whole body trembles violently.

LAURA sits on the floor in a half-kneeling position. Her eyes close for seconds at a time as if praying. But when open she watches the old woman like a hawk.

WENDY sits, alert and watchful in a straight chair near her sister.

HEATHER

....John...it is John!

LAURA seems to stop breathing.

HEATHER

Ohhh...ohhh...yes...

yes...yes...!

It is like a climax. With a deep convulsive shuddering the moaning stops and HEATHER gradually returns to her composure. There is a long, long silence.

Finally HEATHER gets out of her chair and starts to cross the room rowards LAURA.

HEATHER

Laura?

LAURA

I'm here.

HEATHER crosses until her fumbling hands touch LAURA's outstretched fingers. HEATHER takes LAURA's arms in a strong grip. Her pale staring eyes are running with tears.

LAURA

What...did she say?

INT. SISTERS' HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. contd.

HEATHER suddenly, convulsively, clutches LAURA to her bosom. LAURA is overwhelmed by the sudden and frightening strength of this strange woman.

LAURA

What did she say?

44. EXT. OUTSIDE SISTERS' HOTEL. NIGHT.

JOHN looks out through the misted glass of the bar window. He sees LAURA emerging from the hotel. He runs out. LAURA stops as she sees JOHN coming across the street. JOHN stops a few yards from her. Then LAURA runs to him, falling into his arms.

Relief, union, forgiveness. They kiss. JOHN touches his wife with awed tenderness. LAURA draws back, looks into his face, and smiles.

CUT TO:

45. INT. THEIR HOTEL BEDROOM. NIGHT.

They both stand at the end of the bed in the darkness. They are engaged in a private ritual. First JOHN removes an article of LAURA's clothing. Then she removes an article of his. The game is sensual and simple. The filtered moonlight through the open windows gives their skins a glow of warmth. It is still raining outside. They talk softly, without emphasis of any kind in their voices; their sentences tail off as if constricted by sexual anticipation.

JOHN

I got very scared for you.

LAURA

I was all right.

JOHN

I'm overdrunk.

LAURA

Overdrunk?

JOHN

Too much.

Pause.

INT. THEIR HOTEL BEDROOM, NIGHT, contd.

LAURA

Darling, the blind one - Heather - the one who's psychic... she went into a trance while I was there.

JOHN

Try to concentrate.

LAURA

John, try to listen to me.

JOHN

I'm concentrating.

LAURA

She said your life was in danger. Here in Venice. John's life, John's life.... that's what she kept saying.

The words are finally penetrating and having effect on JOHN's alcohol-soaked brain. LAURA moves away slightly before he can remove her final garments.

LAURA

We've got to get out of Venice. Darling, please.... Please listen to her. It's a warning.

JOHN groans and throws himself on the bed. The mood is shattered. But LAURA is insistent, caressing him, kissing him, trying to force him to understand the danger.

LAURA

John! It was Christine again. Trying to warn us. We've got to leave.

JOHN suddenly sits upright, sweeping her aside.

JOHN

Godamn right. On the first boat tomorrow morning.

LAURA closes her eyes in relief.

INT. THEIR HOTEL BEDROOM, NIGHT. contd.

JOHN

It isn't my life that's in danger. It's my sanity. We'll leave all right. Thanks for the vacation.

He flings himself under the bedcovers and buries his head beneath the pillow.

LAURA remains on the end of the bed, staring into the night sky. Listening to the rain pelting down.

SLOW DISSOLVE:

The rain has stopped. A telephone rings. And rings. And rings. It sounds distant, but its very insistence finally rouses JOHN from a deep unconciousness. His hand gropes by the bedside and lifts the bedcover off a chair. The phone is underneath and it is ringing thinly.

LAURA wakes with a start.

LAURA

John?

JOHN has the phone.

JOHN

Hallo?...Hallo?

LAURA looks at her watch.

LAURA

What is it, John? Who is it.

JOHN

It's England.

LAURA is wide awake now and sitting upright.

LAURA

Who? Who is it?

JOHN

I don't know for God's sake!

LAURA pulls at the phone so she can share it. But JOHN

INT. THEIR HOTEL BEDROOM, NIGHT. contd.

OPERATOR (distort)
Your call to Venice...

JOHN
Hello?

OPERATOR (distort)
Just a moment please.

JOHN
Operator, where is this call from please?

OPERATOR (distort)
From England. Just a moment please.

JOHN
Where in England...?

The line goes dead. JOHN pours a drink of water and hands it automatically to LAURA who drinks, passes it back to him. Finally the phone reactivates.

HEADMASTER (on phone)
Hello...Mr. Baxter?

JOHN
Yes.

HEADMASTER
Anthony Babbage, headmaster of Porton School.

JOHN
Yes....

46. INT. HEADMASTER'S STUDY, PORTON SCHOOL. NIGHT.

The HEADMASTER, an urbane forty years old man, holds up his hand for quiet. There is a sense of urgency about the whole room. Two senior POLICEMEN supervise operations. A large map is carefully pinpointed. An Army MAJOR is in conference on another phone while his I/C operates a walkie-talkie radio. Outside, through the window, can be seen several army vehicles and a helicopter, bathed in the light of temporary floodlighting.

INT. HEADMASTER'S STUDY, PORTON SCHOOL, NIGHT. contd.

HEADMASTER

Look there's no immediate cause for alarm, Mr. Baxter, but I felt you ought to be informed at this stage.

JOHN's reply from the other end of the line is muffled. The HEADMASTER goes on.

HEADMASTER

Uhm, the thing is that I'm afraid your son is one of three boys uhm missing from the school. They appear to have spent the night out - they got separated from a school expedition - and there's a full scale search going on at this very moment. Now they've only been missing a few hours up to now but uhm we felt you ought to know.....

47. INT. VENICE HOTEL BEDROOM, NIGHT.

LAURA grabs the phone from JOHN.

LAURA

I'm coming back. I'll be on the first plane in the morning.

Then she throws the receiver back at JOHN and launches herself up to get dressed.

48. INT. HEADMASTER'S STUDY, PORTON SCHOOL, NIGHT.

Cups of tea are being served.

HEADMASTER

Hello Mr. Baxter? Sorry. What was that?

JOHN (distort)

...my wife...plane...morning.

The HEADMASTER makes a face: can't hear a thing.

HEADMASTER

Well, look, there it is Mr. Baxter.

INT. HEADMASTER'S STUDY, PORTON SCHOOL, NIGHT. contd.

HEADMASTER (contd)
Sure everything'll turn out all right. But you can be certain that everything possible is being done at this very moment.

He listens as JOHN says something.

HEADMASTER
No...no, it's quite mild. The forecast is a spot of rain but the helicopters can keep searching in almost anything short of fog.

49. INT. VENICE HOTEL BEDROOM, NIGHT.

LAURA is half-dressed, wildly packing a suitcase as JOHN completes the phone call.

JOHN
...she'll be with you tomorrow morning..yes...that's very kind... thank you Mr. Babbage...goodbye.

He hangs up. Pumps the receiver up and down until he gets a response.

JOHN
Get me the airport.

A pause.

JOHN
Well, when do they come on duty?

He slams the phone down and stumbles out of bed. Crosses to LAURA and tries to hold her, calm her.

LAURA
Darling he said he's sure everything will be all right. Johnnie can't stay lost for long.

LAURA is out of control.

INT. VENICE HOTEL BEDROOM, NIGHT. contd.

LAURA

He said! It may turn out all right for him! I've lost one child in the last ~~one~~ six months. I'm not going to lose...to lose....

She bursts into racking sobs of terror and anguish. JOHN crosses to her bedside table and finds a bottle of pills. He takes out two and returns with a glass of water. LAURA has regained some control. She shakes her head at the proffered pills.

JOHN

Come on, it'll help.

She shakes her head again.

JOHN

Don't be silly.

LAURA

No John!

She smashes the glass out of his hand.
The shattering of the glass seems to have the effect of giving LAURA back her poise. She stares at it.
The crystals of glass glint in the carpet's thick pile. Like a hypnotic object.
LAURA touches the glass with her bare foot, taunting it. Then she looks at JOHN quite calmly.

LAURA

I'm sorry.

JOHN

Okay. here.

He gives her the pills.

JOHN

I'll get another glass.

He turns to the bathroom. LAURA drops the pills deliberately into the broken glass. Her voice is controlled now and low.

INT. VENICE HOTEL BEDROOM, NIGHT. contd.

LAURA

The airport's closed I take it.

JOHN (off)

They open in an hour.

LAURA

I'll go see the hotel manager.
He'll help.

John (returning)

Laura, it's five a.m.

LAURA

Our only child may be dying.

JOHN gives her the water, which she drinks without reference to the pills.

Your presence there is not going to help find him.

LAURA

I'm going.

JOHN

Yes, darling. But your going will not save him. If he needs saving. Knowing Johnnie he probably found some interesting bird's nest and.....

LAURA

That was the warning. You know that, don't you? Christine was trying to warn us about Johnnie. Not you. That's why we had to leave Venice. She.....told....us....

The words are left floating on the air. JOHN is decided by something in LAURA's tone. He puts on a wrap and starts for the door.

JOHN

I'll wake the manager.

50. INT. HOTEL LOBBY. DAWN.

LAURA crosses the lobby carrying a small travelling case. As she reaches the desk JOHN turns to her with a smile of faint encouragement.

JOHN

There's a charter group leaving the hotel in five minutes. He's finding out if you...

At this moment the MANAGER signals JOHN over.

MANAGER

Signor Baxter...I have spoken to the tour leader. They have only one seat on the flight and he is happy to offer it to your wife.

JOHN acknowledges this with a nod. The lobby is getting crowded with CONVENTIONEERS preparing to leave. Their luggage in piles, their voices shrill, their travelling clothes like nothing less than party clothes.

JOHN takes LAURA's hand.

JOHN

Five minutes, darling. It'll be all right.

The rages and the emotional peaks are far behind now. Only the dull flatness of voice spoken in when there is nothing more that can be done.

LAURA

You'll drive to Milan.

JOHN

Yes. After I've seen the site.

Silence. Perhaps reproach that he should think of business at a time like this.

JOHN

I'll get the car on the train at Milan.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY. DAWN. contd.

LAURA turns, looks at him intently.

LAURA

You could always stay here,
Wait until I let you know....
what happens.

JOHN

No. I'm leaving.

He touches his wallet.

JOHN

I've paid the check.

LAURA nods. The reason for leaving isn't that prosaic, but there's nothing to be added.

They watch the milling CONVENTIONEERS together. They look forlorn, isolated and grey. The CAMERA TRACKS AWAY until they are lost in the swirl of people.

51. EXT. HOTEL ON GRAND CANAL. DAY.

LAURA is looking round as JOHN carries her cases. A special motorboat waits, with a laughing crowd of tourists. An English CLERGYMAN comes up, rubbing his hands.

CLERGYMAN

Ah! Haha! Our last bird of
passage, I presume.

He shakes hands with LAURA.

CLERGYMAN

All rather sad, of course.
The end of the holiday.

He looks round. They don't look sad at all.

CLERGYMAN

But a happy homecoming.

JOHN struggles up.

CLERGYMAN

I'm just so sorry we haven't
room for your hubby on our charter.

EXT. HOTEL ON GRAND CANAL. DAY. contd.

He leans forward conspiratorially.

CLERGYMAN

Now do remember - if anyone asks - you're to say you are a full member of the Universal Truth Society.

LAURA

It's very kind of you...

CLERGYMAN

No another word, dear lady.

He turns and raises his voice.

CLERGYMAN

All aboard, friends!

LAURA turns to JOHN.

LAURA

Goodbye, darling. Phone me tonight.

JOHN

I will.

She kisses him and waves as she boards.

He watches, feeling rather lost as the boat pulls away.

CUT TO:

52. EXT. PHONE BOOTH BY GRAND CANAL. DAY.

The life of Venice flows into action across the canals as the sun rises higher. It is going to be a stifling hot day. JOHN is on the phone and we can hear it ringing, ringing, ringing. Finally it is answered. Some words are exchanged. JOHN is clearly not satisfied. We hear 'Gregorio' a few times. JOHN hangs up and steps out of the booth. He walks rapidly to a vaporetto stage.

53. EXT. SAN GREGORIO LANDING STAGE. DAY.

JOHN pays off a boat and bounds up the steps towards the church in the background.

He gets to the front door.

EXT. SAN GREGORIO LANDING STAGE. DAY. contd.

Huddled, half asleep against the door sits ALBERTO. [illegible] LEANING on the door NEAR him is A bored WORKMAN.

JOHN comes up.

JOHN

Alberto - I'm terribly sorry...

ALBERTO stirs and looks up. He looks really rough.

ALBERTO

Hm? What? Ah...um... what's the time?

JOHN glances at his watch.

JOHN

Um...half past seven.

ALBERTO rubs his face.

ALBERTO

I've been here since a quarter to six.

His face is the picture of injured dignity.

CUT TO:

54. INT. SAN GREGORIO. DAY.

The church is enormous, filled with light and shadow, colour and contrast. A great dome towers over the central nave.

The church has a feeling of 'build we must for a crumbling Venice' and there is a cement mixer, several measuring devices, ladders etc. In the centre, oddly out of place, a scaffolding structure reaches on spindly legs into the dome.

As the front door opens and the footsteps echo around the empty church, beams of sunlight spray across the dusty interior.

INT. SAN GREGORIO. DAY. contd.

JOHN, ALBERTO and the WORKMAN enter. Their words can just be heard over the booming sound of the door opening and closing behind them.

JOHN

....so Laura flew back this morning early. I'll get the car on the train ferry tonight.

ALBERTO (preoccupied)

Of course, of course. If there's anything I can do...~~naturally you need only ask~~.

JOHN

I'm sure everything'll be okay...

Their VOICES float on the emptiness of the great church.

ALBERTO (back to what matters)

But you will have time to give me a preliminary report? After dinner? All that is what you've have for.

They stop at the foot of the scaffolding, underneath the dome.

In LONG SHOT they look insignificantly small.

JOHN

Hell yes, that's what I'm here for.

They stare upwards.

JOHN

I'd better have a look.

FROM P.O.V. HIGH IN SCAFFOLDING. JOHN starts climbing the ladder. It sways in and out with his weight. More or less only his head and shoulders can be seen.

C.U. ALBERTO stares up. He calls out.

ALBERTO

All right?

JOHN's VOICE comes faint.

JOHN

Sure.

55. INT. HIGH ON SCAFFOLDING. DAY.

The WORKMAN and JOHN are standing on a plank platform at what seems to be about a thousand feet up. Of course it is nothing like this, but the proximity of the walls, the great windows and the chasm beneath them gives that impressio

The sun still slants across the mosaic, which is just below them. It lights it brilliantly, picking out the golds and brilliant reds.

JOHN seems not to mind heights in the least. He walks up and down the platform as if at central station.

He turns to the WORKMAN.

JOHN

We have to get down a bit.

The WORKMAN appears not to understand.

He points down to the mosaic.

JOHN

Down. Poco profundo.

The WORKMAN's face lights in a smile.

WORKMAN

Ah! Si!

He moves along the platform to the middle point. Then he gestures.

JOHN's P.O.V. A cradle, like those used to paint tall buildings, is slung below. An ablong, boxlike structure, suspended on ropes which run over pulleys and are then securely tied to the scaffolding.

JOHN

Okay. You wind me down?

He mimes again.

The WORKMAN nods, still showing a lot of teeth.

JOHN climbs gingerly into the box. It has sides up to about his waist.

He turns and gives the thumbs up sign.

The WORKMAN moves to the pulley system and hauls on a rope.

The box starts to descend, swaying slightly.

A large knot starts moving slowly up the pulley wheel.

INT. HIGH ON SCAFFOLDING. DAY. contd.

A shout from below.

ALBERTO

Va bene?

THE OWRKMAN leans over and waves.

WORKMAN

Si, signor.

The knot reaches the pulley wheel, and is just not going to get over it. It slips, then the rope comes off.
The box.
Now only effectively held by one rope.
One end drops like a stone about six feet.
With a wild motion, JOHN throws himself towards the good rope, just reaching it. He clings on. There is nothing beneath him but the swinging, pirouetting box.
JOHN's P.O.V. The cathedral floor spinning and whirling is mad circles far below him.
ALBERTO's face, terrified.
The WORKMAN'S face, terrified.
JOHN, his eyes shut, holding on.
The WORKMAN leaps for the pulley and starts to haul.
Very carefully indeed.
The box starts to creak upwards. But as it does so, all the additional weight now on one side only, the scaffolding to which it is attached starts to sag alarmingly.
JOHN's fingers clutch the rope, a trickly of blood between the knuckles.
The entire scaffolding is sagging to the left.
A bolt shears off with a tearing metallic SOUND.
The box lurches. The howling SOUND of wind and warning.
The WORKMAN lashes the pulley to a cross-tie and starts to move to the ladder, away from danger.
JOHN launches himself into space. Crashes into the main body of the scaffolding. There is a terrible tearing cracking SOUND. Bars of scaffolding plunge to the ground.
The WORKMAN is scrambling to safety below.

INT. HIGH ON SCAFFOLDING. DAY. Contd.

JOHN steadies himself on high and moves very gingerly to the ladder edge. The scaffolding sways uneasily. JOHN is white and shaking, shocked beyond response to his terrifying situation.

ALBERTO moves forward, impotent to help yet desperate to give help.

JOHN has reached the laddering and moves like a cat to ease his weight off the cross bars and onto the ladder. Very gradually he slithers down to the first platform. Then to the next platform. Then the penultimate platform. At each one the scaffolding gives a little. Metal bolts shear off and smash to the ground. But finally, incredibly JOHN reaches the ground. ALBERTO tugs his shoulder and drags him to the safety of the entrance portico.

The unearthly SOUNDS of the child and the wind fade as JOHN buries his face in his hands. Finally he looks up again, shakes his head to free himself from the memory and affects a grin at ALBERTO.

JOHN

My life insurance company
got the fright of its life up there.

ALBERTO relaxes visibly, smiling and squeezing JOHN's shoulder in affirmation of his life.

ALBERTO

You need a drink.

JOHN

Unbelievable.

ALBERTO ushers him to the great main doors of the church.

JOHN

It's really ridiculous - but last
night my wife was - warned - I was
in danger.

ALBERTO stares at JOHN with a sudden respect, or perhaps it's fear.

The doors are opened and they walk into the bursting sunlight outside.

56. EXT. OUTSIDE SAN GREGORIO. DAY.

Once outside they skirt the machinery and start to head towards the bridge. But JOHN pauses.

JOHN

Sorry. I'd just like to sit down a minute.

ALBERTO is all solicitousness. JOHN sits on the low wall facing the canal and ALBERTO joins him.

ALBERTO

I will have the bishop sue the contractor for every penny. He will do no more restoration work for us. [redacted]..

JOHN grins a little.

JOHN

It's okay...okay....

Suddenly a FROGMAN surfaces with a splash in the canal beside them. Then another pops up.

[redacted] John what are they doing?

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Alberto looks puzzled

He stops and they walk back.

ALBERTO

Those are police frogmen.

He points to where a police launch rides at anchor, tucked up one of the smaller canals. He raises his voice and calls across to the police launch in Italian.

ALBERTO (in Italian)

(What are you looking for?)

A shouted answer comes back to them.

EXT. OUTSIDE SAN GREGORIO. DAY.contd.

ALBERTO makes a face. He glances at JOHN.

ALBERTO

A body. A woman missing from one of the houses. They think it could be the work of.....

He fumbles for a word.

ALBERTO

The crazy man. The...maniac.

JOHN

What maniac?

ALBERTO

There is a maniac in Venice. He has killed many people. The whole city is terrified.

ALBERTO [illegible] — Insert - 77A

I went to mass last week - and the priest was praying for divine protection from this....madman.

JOHN reacts with passing interest.

No. Not last week. It must have been two weeks ago.

JOHN (smiles)

The last time you went to mass was two weeks ago?

ALBERTO shrugs.

ALBERTO

I am an Italian first. A priest [illegible].

JOHN is watching the mud bubbles from the canal.

JOHN

God - smell that mud.

The FROGMEN have vanished and now one pops up again and yells to the boat.

ALBERTO

They have found her.

~~After the whole city is terrified.~~

ALBERTO (cont)

You do not read the papers?

JOHN answers with a touch of asperity.

JOHN

I've had quite enough bad news in my family recently. Without papers.

ALBERTO

Of course. Forgive me. One forgets.

JOHN

Does one.

~~JOHN is watching the bubbles etc.~~

Cont. on pg. 77

EXT. OUTSIDE SAN GREGORIO. DAY. contd.

The FROGMAN vanishes.

JOHN

Let's go.

But they both stand absolutely hypnotised.

ALBERTO

Yes. Come on.

But they both stand there.

The water erupts with a swirl of mud. Then suddenly there is a body, filthy, lolling face up in the water. The throat is a red and brown gash.

Then the FROGMEN are there with it, towing it towards the launch.

JOHN

Jesus Christ.

The FROGMEN seem elated by their appalling find. They laugh together cheerily.

57. INT. HOTEL BEDROOM. DAY.

A MAID is busy cleaning and changing the sheets. JOHN comes in.

The MAID looks up and speaks in halting English.

MAID

I'm sorry...but eet ees after... midday.

JOHN

Yes. I won't be a minute.

His suitcase stands open on the rack.

He goes to the cupboard, opens it. It is empty.

He scowls and looks about.

His clothes have been heaped on a chair.

He stuffs them without ceremony into his case.

Then goes to the bathroom.

58. INT. BATHROOM. DAY.

He collects his razor kit and opens the cupboard behind the mirror.
He grins ironically.
It is full of LAURA's things - powder, face cream, toothpaste, nail polish.
He takes his sponge bag and scoops them all in.
He is about to go out, when he notices the laundry basket.
He opens it. The same grin.
He reaches in and takes out a nightie and some underclothes.
Then he feels something odd. He takes it out. It is a crumpled photograph, ~~[illegible]~~. He unscrambles it gently. It is a photograph of LAURA, crumpled and distorted by someone's attempt to destroy it. JOHN flattens it out, ~~[illegible]~~.

59. INT. HOTEL LOBBY. DAY.

JOHN waits while a PORTER carries his bags from the elevator. The MANAGER appears to say goodbye.

MANAGER
Sorry to see you go, Mr. Baxter.

They shake hands.

MANAGER
You are taking the train?

JOHN shakes his head.

JOHN
My car's on the mainland.

The PORTER passes him. With a last nod to the MANAGER JOHN follows.

60. EXT. LANDING STAGE NEAR HOTEL. DAY.

The PORTER loads the bags expertly onto a waiting vaporetto.
JOHN tips him, then finds a place in the bows.
The vaporetto swings away from the landing stage.

61. EXT. VAPORETTO ON GRAND CANAL. DAY.

JOHN sits in the bows of the boat hunched over his briefcase and trying to scribble a few notes. The papers blow under

EXT. VAPORETTO ON GRAND CANAL. DAY. contd.

his hands and he daren't lift his pen from the page for fear he'll lose the paper.

The vaporetto is almost empty in the afternoon heat.

JOHN finally decides to give up the unequal struggle and pockets his pen carefully. Then he folds the papers and slips them into his briefcase, removing the keys to his car at the same time. He checks these in his methodical manner and pockets them. Finally he has completed all the little exercises and snaps his briefcase shut before standing up. But he freezes in mid-movement.

Among the busy canal traffic is a private hire launch heading towards him and coming from the opposite direction. In the bows of the launch stand three people. LAURA, looking distraught, her hair blowing in the breeze. And the two old SISTERS on either side of her. They seem to be talking earnestly to her, practically gripping her between them.

JOHN scrambles across the benches of the vaporetto as the two boats pass.

And there is no doubt. Barely ten yards from him; LAURA and the two SISTERS, staring emptily ahead.

In a moment, JOHN is fighting his way back through the body of the vaporetto to the stern.

He throws himself against the stern rail violently. The vaporettos move fast and although he can still see LAURA and the SISTERS they are now some forty yards past. JOHN cups his hands.

JOHN

Laura! Laura!

But the boat turns into a side canal and is lost from sight. He sits down, lost in thought; puzzlement, almost anger crossing his face. What in hell is she doing there.

EXT. VAPORETTO ON GRAND CANAL. DAY. contd.

The vaporetto turns into a quay.
In a second he has decided. He leaps up, fights his way to the luggage area and takes his suitcase, heading for the exit.

62. EXT. LANDING STAGE. DAY.

He thrusts his ticket at the collector, who glances at it and frowns, calling out to John.

COLLECTOR
Signor, Non scendese encoua. E la fouaata Prossima.

JOHN (without understanding)
No.... No....

He pushes past the line waiting to get on.
Lugging his suitcase and his briefcase, he sets off at a half walk, half shamble back towards the hotel.

63. INT. HOTEL. DAY.

He arrives sweating, his jacket slung over his shoulders.
He goes to the desk. It is a different CLERK.

CLERK
Signor?

JOHN
My wife. Has she come in?

CLERK
Signor?

JOHN
Mrs. Baxter. Have you seen Mrs. Baxter.

The CLERK's English is obviously strictly limited.
He turns to the reception book and scans down the names.

CLERK
Baxter....Baxter....No, signor....
no Baxter.....

JOHN
Look. Where's the manager?

CLERK
I theenk.....out.....

INT. HOTEL. DAY. contd.

But he shrugs and goes through the door at the back.
There is an interminable pause. An American WOMAN comes up and thumbs through some postcards on a rack, selecting a few.
She waits, too. Smiling sickly.
Silence.
Finally she pounds the bell.
The MANAGER appears.

WOMAN

Ah. I want to buy....

MANAGER

Mr. Baxter!

WOMAN

How much are these.....

The MANAGER turns and gives the most polished of smiles.

MANAGER

Twenty five lira each, signora.

In one fluid motion he is back to JOHN.

JOHN

My wife. Has she come in?

MANAGER

Mrs. Baxter?

JOHN controls himself.

JOHN

Yes.

MANAGER

She did not take the plane?

JOHN is constantly scanning the people coming into the hotel.

JOHN

No. I saw her a few minutes ago.

MANAGER

But.., she left with the tour.

JOHN

I'm trying to tell you she did <u>not</u> take the plane, she did <u>not</u> leave

INT. HOTEL. DAY. contd.

JOHN (contd.)

with the tour. Have you seen her?

The MANAGER shakes his head.

MANAGER

She has not come in yet, signor.

The WOMAN looks up.

WOMAN

How much is airmail to the States?

JOHN breaks away from the desk and stands in the middle of the lobby. Constantly he glances at his watch, at the people at the stairs. Suddenly he breaks back to the desk.

JOHN

There's no other way into this place is there?

The MANAGER shakes his head.

MANAGER

Perhaps she got lost on the way back, signor. Venice is.....

JOHN

She was on the Grand Canal. So is this hotel.

He hesitates.

Look, my wife has been ill. Anything could have happened.

JOHN goes back to his pacing the lobby. The MANAGER watches him for a moment in that special way Italians reserve for crazy foreigners. Then the MANAGER issues brief instructions to the CLERK and goes into his little office, leaving the door open so he can watch JOHN. He picks up the phone.

MANAGER

Il aeropuerto, por piacere.....

JOHN stands, letting the waves of tourists beat over and around him. Once he thinks he sees LAURA and dashes forward, calling her name, but it is a woman twice LAURA's age.

INT. HOTEL. DAY. contd.

He walks to the main door and peers out, watching the passers-by. Then he turns as he sees the MANAGER beckoning him.

He dashes back to the desk.

MANAGER

Signor Baxter - I have called the airport. The plane left, but unfortunately, they do not have passenger lists for tours.

JOHN finally decides.

JOHN

Where's the nearest police station?

MANAGER (soothing)

Perhaps Mrs. Baxter paused to do some shopping. Venice is famous for...

JOHN

For crissake! My wife was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Last night she learnt her son was lost. She's supposed to have gone on the plane to help search for him - but this morning I see her with two crazy old woman! Where's the goddam police station?

The MANAGER points to a map under the glass of the desk.

MANAGER

Two minutes, signor. To the right. Ponte Verdi.

He looks up

I am very sorry, signor.

JOHN has pulled a pad and pencil towards himself and starts to write.

JOHN

Okay. Now. If anybo...if she comes in or anything you want to reach me for, I'm with Father - Alberto - Russo....

INT. HOTEL. DAY. contd.

He writes the name, then has to search through his address book for the telephone number.

MANAGER

Count Russo. Yes, signor, we have his number.

JOHN stops, looks up and then closes his address book.

JOHN

I'll collect my bags.

The MANAGER bows, JOHN turns on his heel and strides out of the hotel.

The WOMAN writing her postcards looks after him pityingly, then turns to the Manager.

WOMAN

That poor man. What a terrible vacation he's having!

64. INT. VENICE POLICE STATION. DAY.

The interior of the police station is an enormous, undecorated hallway. A staircase sweeps up and away to a balustrade above. The place echoes and resonates with the SOUNDS of civil servants filling up their time between dawn and dusk. The walls are green, perhaps to hide the verdigris, high and shiny and utterly devoid of decoration. There are two desks in the main hallway. There are several doors to unknowable back rooms and corridors. There is ordered bustle; PEOPLE coming and going, POLICEMEN filing reports, going off duty, arriving on duty.

JOHN approaches the desk. A UNIFORMED OFFICIAL looks up.

JOHN

Do you speak English?

The OFFICIAL points to the stairs.

OFFICIAL (in Italian)

(Second floor)

He bends back to his papers and JOHN turns to go up the staircase.

65. INT. RECEPTION ROOM. DAY.

A bench runs along one side of the room, on which sit a MAN and a WOMAN. They look very English. At the end of the bench is a glass door with lettering.
JOHN wonders what to do. He stands. The MAN looks up. He smiles.

MAN

Might as well sit down.
Probably be ages.

JOHN smiles and sits down.

MAN

The wife had her handbag whipped.
Incredible. Just put it down in
a respectable shop, and pfft! Gone.

The WOMAN leans over.

WOMAN

It was the salesgirl. I know
it was.

MAN

Anyway, it's gone. And you?

FLASH SHOT: LAURA on the motor launch between the two SISTERS.

JOHN

Oh...my briefcase. Had some
rather important papers.

The door opens and a young POLICEMAN stands beckoning the MAN and the WOMAN. They get up and go in.
JOHN sits miserably for a moment or two, then lights a cigarette. Then he notices a coffee machine in the corner.
He gets up to it, feeling in his pocket for change.
He studies the instructions carefully, but they are in Italian and rather long.
He twists a dial to what he takes to be coffee, black with sugar and inserts his coin. Nothing.
He bangs the machine. Still nothing. Nothing is going right today and this proves it.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM. DAY. contd.

Then he notices a little red button. He presses it. The machine swings into action. In the recess in the middle of the machine a jet of scalding coffee spurts straight down into nothing, splashing out all over him. He feverishly grabs a paper cup from a pile which he notices rather late, and shoves it under the stream. It is not a very good fit in the first place and some of it goes over his hand. He yanks it to safety, emitting a yell. He licks his hand which is an ugly red from the scalding liquid. He takes out his handkerchief and wraps it round. Then takes out the cup. The bottom is just dirty. With a sigh he drops it into the waste paper basket rubbing down the stain with his injured hand in the handkerchief.

The door opens and the MAN and WOMAN are shown out. The MAN pauses to watch JOHN, and holds up his own half-bandaged hand.

MAN

Got you too, did it? [redacted]
Silly dago machines.

The POLICEMAN gives the man an icy stare and ushers JOHN into the office.

66. INT. A POLICE OFFICE. DAY.

Under a bright spotlight a sketch artist is putting the finishing touches to a sketch of the two SISTERS. It is a good likeness.

JOHN is ushered in by an INSPECTOR and shown the sketch. He nods his approval.

A POLICEMAN crosses and offers a pile of reproduced photos about 6" x 5". JOHN looks over the should of the INSPECTOR. The photo is enlarged from the crumpled snapshot of LAURA. It looks fuzzy and faintly dated. The [redacted] marks look strange and distorting.

INSPECTOR

Kidnapping is a very serious charge, signor.

INT. A POLICE OFFICE.DAY. contd.

JOHN

All right then. Not kidnapping. But they sure as hell have her some place. Now what do you call that?

INSPECTOR

It can be anything from a cup of coffee....to kidnapping. However. The details have all been noted. You must now let us proceed in the usual manner.

JOHN is steamed up now.

JOHN

The usual manner isn't good enough. How many times do I have to say it? These sisters are nuts! Dangerous nuts!

The INSPECTOR is quite aware that this has been said to him before.

INSPECTOR

But the signor has not really explained why we should consider them dangerous.

JOHN

They claim they can...can talk to the dead and...and...I just know they are! They're evil!

INSPECTOR

A lot of old ladies enjoy trying to get in touch with

JOHN

God damn it! They've got my wife! Why the hell isn't someone down there looking for them?

The INSPECTOR is all sweet reason.

INT. A POLICE OFFICE. DAY. contd.

INSPECTOR

Because you haven't been able to give us the address of their hotel, signor.

JOHN

I told you. A small cheap hotel...it's opposite a bar... down, it can't be more than five minutes walk from San Zaccariah.

The INSPECTOR throws down the pencil.

INSPECTOR

Half of Venice is five minutes walk from San Zaccariah, signor.

JOHN

Well goddamit, I'll find their hotel!

INSPECTOR

You don't even know the name of this hotel?

JOHN

I...no, no I don't. It's...hell it can't be harm to find. The least you can do is to look.

INSPECTOR

Signor, Venice is in the middle of a fullscale man hunt. In case you had not heard - we have a murderer on the loose in our city. ~~One murderer have been discovered in one night.~~ Every single tourist has mislaid his camera, his wife or his passport. The usual 70 robberies a day continue unabated. Now. We will do everything we can to find your wife. Your co-operation will be greatly appreciated. You find

INT. A POLICE OFFICE. DAY. contd.

INSPECTOR (contd)
the hotel. Perhaps that will end the entire mystery. We will do what we can to locate these women. By the usual channels and that takes time.

JOHN is exasperated and storms to the door.

JOHN
Goddamit I will. And I'll find the U.S. consul.

INSPECTOR
Buon giorno.

JOHN goes out, slamming the door. The INSPECTOR waits for a moment, then reaches for the telephone.

INSPECTOR
Gianni? Pronto....

He starts to issue an instruction.

67. EXT. OUTSIDE POLICE STATION. DAY.

JOHN comes running down the steps. He hesitates at the bottom, then walks quickly towards the vaporetto jetty. A thin, tall POLICEMAN in plain clothes emerges from the building too. He stands watching, identifying JOHN, and then very quietly following him to the jetty.

68. INT/EXT. VAPORETTO. DAY.

JOHN steps on board the vaporetto and moves to the front. The POLICEMAN waits discreetly to the last minute, then flashes his identity card for the toll booth and steps onto the stern of the boat as it pulls out into the canal. The POLICEMAN buries his head in a newspaper. The headline is lurid and concerns the maniac killer.

JOHN paces up and down the fore deck. Much to the annoyance of the few TOURISTS also foregathered there. But JOHN is totally oblivious of them.

CUT TO:

69. EXT. SAN ZACCARIAH. DAY.

JOHN strides past the restaurant where they dined the previous night. He hesitates, peers in the windows.
HIS P.O.V. THROUGH WINDOWS. The restaurant is empty except for a PRIEST and a NUN tucking into a delicious mound of ice cream.
JOHN looks at the two streets ahead of him and closes his eyes a moment.
FLASH SHOT. The rain, the urchins, the umbrella and LAURA walking ahead down the right hand street.
JOHN moves on, taking the right hand street.
The thin POLICEMAN follows.

70. EXT. STREET NEAR SAN ZACCARIAH. DAY.

The shadows of the buildings on either side are dark and deep, the street curiously sinister as a wind eddies down it tossing a few leaves and garbage around JOHN's feet.
In the distance a child's breathing can be heard. JOHN slows and looks round fearfully.
The street behind him is empty.
The street ahead is empty. He runs forward on impulse.

JOHN

Christine?

The very fact of having called her name makes him stumble to a halt. He frowns in self-disgust. He has reached a narrow bridge over a dark, backwater canal. The pathway stretches away in several directions along the canal bank, over the bridge, along the far side, and off in two further directions to his left.
JOHN leans against the wall in momentary relief. For life continues normally here. TOURISTS wander with their cameras and guidebooks. A Gondola moves slowly across the foul water of the canal. Laundry dries in the shafts of sunlight that strike through the narrow gaps between houses.
As JOHN rests a moment he looks up to the right where, across the canal, an alleyway runs to the brow of an incline

EXT. STREET NEAR SAN ZACCARIAH. DAY. contd.

And standing there is a CHILD -- the same CHILD he saw running over the boats the previous night. The CHILD is silhouetted against sharp sunlight. A howl of sound swells and ebbs away.

JOHN blinks and leans forward.

He moves to cross the bridge.

But the CHILD is running. The TELEPHOTO LENS makes the CHILD's steps appear futile. Although in a moment she turns the corner and vanishes.

JOHN is half way across the bridge. He stops, shakes his head and stares down into the canal waters.

FLASH SHOT: At the lakeside. JOHN carries the fragile, broken body of his daughter back up the path. LAURA is touching the child's hair. JOHNNIE walks behind them like a pallbearer. Their faces are all grey, their movements automatic.

The water of the canal is broken by a bucketful of slops being tossed from a balcony. JOHN's reveries is broken. He goes back over the bridge and walks slowly along the canal bank. Peering up at streets as he passes them, still searching for the old sisters' hotel.

The thin POLICEMAN follows uncannily, vanishing into doorways as JOHN hesitates, turning his back as JOHN looks over his shoulder.

71. EXT. STREET IN VENICE. DAY.

JOHN turns up a street, walking away from the canal. The street is short. He turns down another street.

72. EXT. ANOTHER STREET IN VENICE. DAY.

This, too, is short and similar to the last. JOHN is getting desperate. He walks up a third street.

73. EXT. THIRD STREET IN VENICE. DAY.

This street runs directly onto the canal from whence he came JOHN slows and stops. Then turns back on his tracks. At the intersection with the last narrow street he almost bumps into the POLICEMAN who is just rounding the corner as JOHN reaches it. The POLICEMAN doesn't blink, but moves smoothly

EXT. THIRD STREET IN VENICE. DAY. contd.

on in the direction he was going.

JOHN looks at him, frowning in faint recognition, then moves on to the street round the corner.

74. EXT. ANOTHER STREET IN VENICE. DAY.

JOHN looks in both directions on this street. But there is no feature he might recognize. He continues down it nevertheless. And as he walks he slowly realizes he is staring at the bar where he drank the previous night. And opposite the bar - is the sisters' hotel.

JOHN starts to run.

The POLICEMAN watches from the shadows of an alleyway.

JOHN runs into the hotel.

The POLICEMAN moves fast now, striding down the street, checking the hotel and going into the bar opposite where he can watch.

75. INT. BAR OPPOSITE SISTERS' HOTEL. DAY.

THROUGH THE WINDOW. The POLICEMAN is dialling the owner's telephone.

76. INT. LOBBY OF SISTERS HOTEL. DAY.

JOHN gives the bell on the desk a good pumping, but still no one appears. The place is silent as the grave. He thumps on the desk with his fist.

JOHN

Anybody here?

A door slams somewhere in the back.

A wheezing shuffle down the passage and a very fat WOMAN her hands covered in flour, shuffles in behind the desk.

Do you speak English?

Her eyes narrow in concentration, and she slowly nods her head.

Right. I'm looking for two old ladies....

He speaks very clearly and distinctly, not forgetting the old rule about raising your voice when speaking to foreigners.

Scottish.

INT. LOBBY OF SISTERS' HOTEL. DAY. contd.

He covers his eyes with one hand for a moment.

One was blind. Sisters.

He points to the floor.

Here!

A faint look of understanding crosses her face. She nods.

WOMAN

Ah! Si!

She shambles out from behind the desk and starts up the steps. He follows her in an agony of suspense at her speed, which is about one step every five seconds. Half way up, she pauses and turns to him grinning. She puts her hand over her eyes. Nods.

WOMAN

Si. Cieca. Si.

She finally makes it to the top of the stairs and stands in front of the door. She nods to it.

He grabs the handle and pushes. The door opens.

77. INT. ROOM. DAY.

His P.O.V. The room is empty. Absolutely empty. The beds are stripped. The cupboard is open and bare. Drawers lie open and empty. The room has been left in a hurry.

JOHN throws open other drawers. Nothing. The luggage rack stands naked.

JOHN spins round. The WOMAN is still nodding and grinning in the doorway.

JOHN

Where are they? They've gone!
Where are they?

The WOMAN's eyes narrow again in concentration.

WOMAN

Si. Gone. Ver' nice room. You take?

JOHN

Where have they gone?

The WOMAN shrugs.

WOMAN

This morning they go. Nice room.

INT. ROOM. DAY. contd.

There is a movement in the doorway and standing beside the WOMAN is the thin POLICEMAN who has been following JOHN. The WOMAN turns to him as he touches her shoulder. He flips a wallet open and shows her a badge. Her eyes widen. He speaks very rapidly to her in Italian, and she speaks rapidly back. Then the POLICEMAN shows his badge to JOHN.

POLICEMAN

Thank you Mr. Baxter. I think now we take this most seriously.

JOHN

Who are you?

POLICEMAN

Sabbioni. ~~Reparto omicidi~~ Sez Time homicidi.

~~Omicidio.~~ Murder squad.

JOHN holds onto the bed head.

78. EXT. NEAR ALBERTO's PALAZZO. DAY.

JOHN, in a fuming impatience, is getting off a private motorboat at the small landing stage.

He stands up, getting change from his pocket, dumping it in the driver's hands, takes his case and leaps ashore.

What he doesn't realise is that one has to be very careful getting off motorboats anywhere, and especially in Venice, where all the steps are at best wet, and at worst slimy.

He loses his balance and only stays on the steps at the expense of the knees of the trousers, and his suitcase, which is half immersed in the canal.

The DRIVER of the boat grins and pulls away, breaking into an aria.

JOHN stares after him, furious, then goes up the steps to an imposing old iron studded door.

He glances at the number and reaches out for the great iron bell and pulls hard.

He then tries to rub some of the slime off his knees. All he does is spread it.

His suitcase oozes dirty water, which runs in a small stream down the steps.

EXT. NEAR ALBERTO'S PALAZZO. DAY.

He reaches up and gives the bell push another great yank, his anger bursting forth in a flood. He yells as loud as he can.

JOHN (yelling)

Come on!

Two extremely elegant VENETIANS, a man and a woman, walk round the corner and stop, looking at him with surprise. They wait, staring at him.

JOHN

And just what the bloody hell do you want?

The MAN smiles, steps past JOHN and uses a small modern bell push which had completely escaped JOHN's notice. The door is opened instantly. The COUPLE smile and pass JOHN.

MAN

Scusi, signor.

JOHN is covered with confusion.

JOHN

I'm terribly sorry....I had no idea....

The door is about to close, but he just gets in.

79. INT. HALL, ALBERTO'S PALAZZO. DAY.

It is small, but extremely elegant, with a marble staircase climbing up to a window opposite the door. Faded tapestries hang on the walls. There is an air of resignation to decay and damp which is all pervasive, but seems to be denied by the clammer of a drinks party from the room on the right. The MAID who opened the door gives him a curious smile, bobs and points to a small cloakroom on the left. He looks in dumps his suitcase, still dripping and crosses the hall to where the sound of conversation comes from the sitting room.

80. INT. SITTING ROOM. DAY.

The room is small, but elegant, with a marbled staircase climbing up to a window opposite the door. Faded tapestries hang on the walls. There is an air of resignation to decay

INT. SITTING ROOM. DAY. contd.

and damp which is all-pervasive, but seems to be denied by the clamor of PEOPLE in the room.

The people are a curious bunch indeed. [illegible], [illegible]. They are gathered to look at several paintings propped on furniture round the room, and the paintings are, to say the least, suggestive.

Amidst all this and controlling it with dignity and style is the oddly clerical figure of ALBERTO. [illegible] moment and moves quickly across the room to greet him.

ALBERTO

My dear JOHN, where are your things? I'll show you your room....this is absolutely appalling.,....have the police any news?

JOHN seems profoundly relieved. At last there is someone to confide in.

JOHN

The two old sisters have vanished. That finally made the police start taking me seriously.

ALBERTO

And you will want to call England, no? Oh what a terrible day for you.

He gestures at the people in the room.

I'm so sorry about - this. A young artist. They implore me to use my influence. I have none, I tell them. One knows a few people who buy art. But this.....

He flicks one of the paintings disdainfully.

JOHN

Could I use the telephone? I'm sorry....

ALBERTO

Of course, of course...

who looks scruffy + unkempt,
JOHN finally gets up next to ALBERTO and makes his presence recognized.

JOHN

Alberto. . .

ALBERTO (seeing him)

Ah. You are here. Has the maid shown you a room?

JOHN

No, uh not yet. Look I'm really embarassed about this. . .

ALBERTO

Come. I will find the maid.

He starts across the room. JOHN talks by way of explanation.

JOHN

At least I got the police to take me seriously finally. The two old sisters have vanished. That got them moving.

ALBERTO is sweeping through the room acknowledging a dozen different people as he goes.

ALBERTO

Ecco! Va bene? Ah Luigi! Ciao, carissima. Que magnifico. Salute Marco! Etc.

The warmth of his greetings to his friends is in marked contrast to his attitude towards JOHN. INT. HALLWAY. DAY. But finally they are into the hallway of the palazzo and JOHN sees the telephone.

JOHN

Do you think I could call England? I'm sorry. . .

ALBERTO nods, without speaking and picks up the telephone. He dials a number, waits in silence. A pause. Then he asks, in Italian, for the overseas operator.

INT. SITTING ROOM. DAY. cont'd.

ALBERTO sweeps him through the room back towards the hallway. As they pass various people ALBERTO does his suave impersonation of an Italian Count enjoying his own party.

ALBERTO

Ecco! Va bene? Ah Luigi! Ciao. Carissima. Que magnifico. Salute Marco! etc.

They get to the door and ALBERTO ushers JOHN through.

81. INT. HALLWAY. DAY.

The telephone is on a table by the staircase. ALBERTO picks it up and dials a number. He asks, in Italian, for the overseas operator.

ALBERTO

You have the number?

JOHN fumbles for the piece of paper in his pocket, then takes the phone from ALBERTO.

JOHN

The number in England is...oh...

He makes a face to ALBERTO: impossible telephones, he must wait. ALBERTO sees a couple leaving - the same couple that arrived with JOHN only a moment ago. He scampers across to them.

JOHN turns his back on the hallway.

JOHN (into phone)

047-229-7861.

He repeats it lubriously in Italian.

ALBERTO is explaining to the COUPLE the odd American's predicament. He walks nearer to JOHN as he tells them. JOHN turns round to find them facing him, staring in sympathy and interest at this poor man.

ALBERTO

Amadeo and Maria di Torelli.

I have been explaining to them the reasons for your presence here.

INT. HALLWAY. DAY. contd.

AMADEO DI TORELLI bows stiffly from the waist. JOHN doesn't quite have a proper response. And anyway the operator is talking on the phone.

JOHN

What? Uh - scusi...momento....

He hands the phone to ALBERTO for translation.

ALBERTO

Pronto.

The operator repeats her instruction. ALBERTO acknowledges and hangs up.

They will call in a few minutes.

AMADEO now holds out his hand to be formally introduced to JOHN.

AMADEO

Please accept our sincere sympathies.

MARIA

I hope the police are making every effort.

JOHN

I think they are.

[redacted]

And as if this was not enough poor Professor Baxter was inspecting the mosaic at San Gregorio this morning when the scaffolding nearly collapsed.

JOHN

It's not been my day.

MARIA

You are architect?

ALBERTO

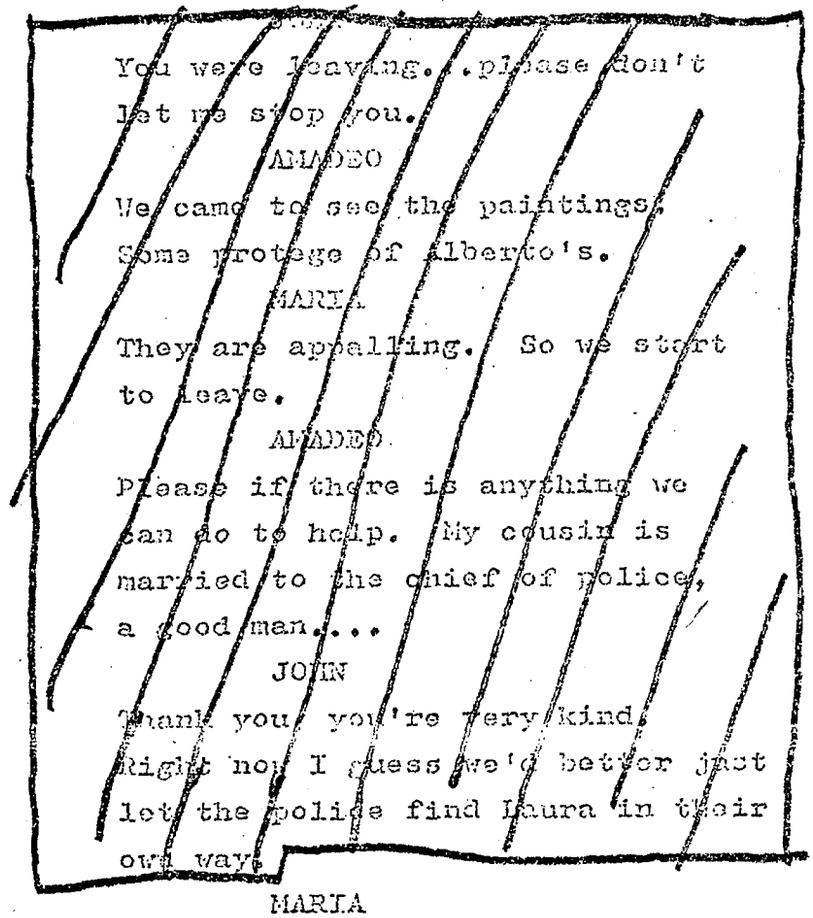
He is the finest restoration expert in Europe.

[redacted] of the FANS about to leave. He [redacted] conversation leaving JOHN with the TORELLIS.

AMADEO

I met the Chief of Police once.
A very vague man. I really can't
understand how he got where he is.
So common.

INT. HALLWAY. DAY. contd.



You were leaving...please don't let me stop you.

AMADEO

We came to see the paintings. Some protege of Alberto's.

MARIA

They are appalling. So we start to leave.

AMADEO

Please if there is anything we can do to help. My cousin is married to the chief of police, a good man....

JOHN

Thank you, you're very kind. Right now I guess we'd better just let the police find Laura in their own way.

MARIA

Your wife and your son! It is dreadful!

At that precise moment the telephone shrills. JOHN dives to the receiver.

JOHN

Hello?

The TORELLIS move away to give him privacy.

82. INT. ENGLISH STUDY. DAY.

MRS. BABBAGE is on the phone.

MRS. BABBAGE

Oh Mr. Baxter - I'm so glad you called. We've been trying to reach you, but didn't know where you were. Everything's fine. They were sheltering in a cave....

83. INT. HALL. DAY.

JOHN covers the phone and speaks to ALBERTO at his elbow.

JOHN

Thank God. They've found him.

MRS. BABAGGE's VOICE comes quite clearly.

MRS. BABBAGE (O.S.)

...then they lit a fire and a helicopter saw the smoke.

84. INT. ENGLISH STUDY. DAY.

MRS. BABBAGE

But...

The CAMERA STARTS PULLING BACK.

MRS. BABBAGE

I expect you want to speak to your wife.

85. INT. HALL. DAY.

JOHN

What?

He sits down slowly, groping behind him for a chair.

86. INT. STUDY. DAY.

LAURA takes the phone and bubbles into it happily.

LAURA

Darling - isn't it wonderful? Johnnie's just fine and proud as punch because his picture's in the paper.

There is a pause.

LAURA

Are you all right, John? Where are you? Venice?

She sighs.

LAURA

You didn't go out and get smashed did you?

87. INT. HALL. DAY.

JOHN

No...No, the car's fine.

INT. HALL. DAY. contd.

JOHN (contd)

Nothing like that.

He is suddenly drained, exhausted.

JOHN

Well - it's kind of hard to explain.. I thought I saw you with those two sisters. On the Grand Canal.

LAURA

Oh John - you've got them on the brain. Now listen, Johnnie's fine. I'm fine. I'll book back on the nine o'clock plane. I'll be with you for a late dinner.

(a pause)

John - are you sure you're all right?

88. INT. HALL. DAY.

JOHN

Yes. I'm all right.

He is clearly not. He is white as a sheet.

89. INT. STUDY. DAY.

LAURA

Darling - we'll start again. We'll drive down to Pisa and Florence and Rome and we'll stay at the.....

90. INT. HALL. DAY.

JOHN

You're coming back here? We've nowhere to stay. The hotel didn't have a room....

He's still deeply perplexed.

JOHN

Laura - Where are you now?

LAURA (O.S.)

At the school, darling. Now listen. I'll be in by eleven,

INT. HALL. DAY. contd.

LAURA (O.S. contd)
all right? Stay at the hotel...

JOHN
At Alberto's. I'm staying with Alberto.

LAURA (O.S.)
[redacted] Darling, stay at Alberto's and I'll be in by eleven. Okay? John? Is that okay.

JOHN nods dumbly at the phone.

JOHN
Fine. Yes okay.

LAURA's goodbyes are lost in a tidal wave of static. JOHN replaces the receiver.

ALBERTO is nearby and considerate.

ALBERTO
She's coming back?

JOHN nods.

ALBERTO
I suppose she'll have to stay here too.

JOHN
I saw her.

ALBERTO tries to shrug it all off.

ALBERTO
Venice is full of [redacted] truly attractive women...the grand canal is wide... [redacted]... well I must be getting back to my guests.

JOHN
I saw her! Christ, Alberto, I've been married to her for ten years. I know my own wife.

There is a heavy pounding on the front door. ALBERTO excuses himself and goes to open it. JOHN relapses into the chair by the telephone table.

INT. HALL DAY. contd.

ALBERTO opens the door and there are TWO UNIFORMED POLICEMEN standing there.
JOHN groans loudly.
The TORELLIS appear at his side and see the POLICE arguing vehemently with ALBERTO in rapid Italian.
MARIA TORELLI touches JOHN's shoulder.

MARIA

Now what's the matter?

JOHN stands up slowly.

JOHN

They've found them. Oh Christ.
They've found them.

The TORELLIS are utterly baffled.

AMADEO

You're not happy? But you said....

JOHN

No-No- not my boy. Not my wife. Two sisters I was looking for.

He walks to the door as the TORELLIS do a long slow reaction

CUT TO:

91. EXT. LANDING STAGE BY POLICE STATION. EVENING.

The lights of two police launches bob in the water alongside the hulking shadow of the building. The water is spattered with reflected lights from the imposing building.

92. INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. NIGHT.

The INSPECTOR sits behind his desk. JOHN sits opposite him looking thoroughly contrite.

INSPECTOR

Signor Baxter - it would be foolish to say that you have not put us to a lot of trouble.....

But in spite of his words, there is a tolerant understanding in his voice.

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. NIGHT. contd.

INSPECTOR (contd.)

We have more...

He reaches for a word.

important things to look for than a wife who is safe in England.

JOHN

I really am deeply sorry.

He stands up.

I know the strain you're under.... I can only apologise again.

The INSPECTOR smiles.

INSPECTOR

We were merely doing our job. If I were you, I would save your apologies.

He crosses to the door. Opens it.

For where they are most needed.

JOHN walks out.

93. INT. POLICE STATION. NIGHT.

C.U. WENDY, the sighted sister, is furious.

WENDY

Mr. Baxter-this has been an extremely unpleasant experience. Four hours we've been here. And frankly the humiliation of being dragged from our hotel like common thieves.....

The CAMERA HAS PULLED BACK to reveal that the two SISTERS AND JOHN are sitting in a squalid interview room. Many empty teacups testify to the length of the sisters' stay. JOHN is taking his punishment as well as he can.

JOHN

I really am.....

INT. POLICE STATION. NIGHT. contd.

WENDY

...and on the flimsiest of pretexts. My Italian may not be up to the sophistries of Pirandello but I'm quite clear when scruffy policemen mutter accusations about kidnapping at me.

JOHN

I just thought...the police assumed... when they found you'd left your hotel suddenly that...

WENDY

We changed hotels, Mr. Baxter. After an incident last night. Some sneak thief or pervert was caught peering into keyholes and pursued....We are not going to stay in that kind of hotel.

JOHN is silent a moment.

JOHN

I'm sorry. I can't tell you how embarrassed and...well, sorry I am.

HEATHER speaks for the first time.

HEATHER

Oh Mr. Baxter, Wendy is only going on at you because she is/born, hand-reared, spoon-fed, gilt-edged nag.

The blind eyes swivel towards the cowed sister.

Now stop it, Wendy! Mr. Baxter has apologized. He can do no more.

WENDY looks grumpily at her sister before speaking.

WENDY

He can escort the both of us home.

94. EXT. VENICE AIRPORT. NIGHT.

A jet lands. Its lights blinking and reflected over the sheet of water before the runway looms up.

95. INT. VENICE AIRPORT. NIGHT.

The place is not crowded. It's too late at night. The CAMERA picks out ALBERTO, waiting at the arrivals gate, scanning the grey faces of the TOURISTS who emerge blinking in the bright artificial lights.
LAURA is one of them. She sees ALBERTO and smiles- still looking for JOHN. But when ALBERTO comes up to her and takes her bag, he explains what has happened. Her smile relaxes. All is well. She is back.

96. EXT. VAPORETTO ON VENICE CANAL. NIGHT.

HEATHER and WENDY sit in the almost empty vaporetto as it pulls away from the police station. JOHN sits between them. He is escorting them home. But none of them talks.

97. INT. ALBERTO'S PRIVATE LAUNCH. NIGHT.

The boat moves away from the airport towards the beauties of Venice by night.
The lights of the city glint across the water. The city itself seems to hover like a cut-out shimmering on a distant mirage.
The only odd sight is that of a priest driving a fast launch with a beautiful woman.

ALBERTO is finishing his story of JOHN's exploits clearly suitably embroidered.

ALBERTO
...so the old ladies were clapped in irons, and were probably tortured to reveal where they had hidden your body.

LAURA is laughing. She thinks suddenly.

LAURA
They won't do anything to him will they?

ALBERTO shakes his head.

They drive in silence for a ~~long~~ moment.

LAURA

I'm so grateful to you for collecting me.

ALBERTO says nothing ~~whatever~~ for a moment & then lets his ill-grace have its way.

ALBERTO

I had to see someone off.

LAURA

Oh.

ALBERTO

Your husband will be at the police station.

LAURA looks up sharply.

LAURA

What?

ALBERTO

He behaved stupidly. Half the police force were searching for you. With this maniac in Venice they treat every missing person most seriously.

LAURA

Oh my God, poor John!

ALBERTO

Poor police.

LAURA thinks suddenly.

LAURA

They won't do anything to him will they?

ALBERTO shakes his head.

INT. ALBERTO'S PRIVATE LAUNCH. NIGHT. contd.

ALBERTO

We depend on tourists. A number of them are bound to be mad.

98. EXT. LANDING STAGE NEAR SISTERS' NEW PENSIONE. NIGHT.

The vaporetto pulls away into the dark night of the canals beyond, leaving JOHN, HEATHER and WENDY on the landing stage.

WENDY

Mr. Baxter.....if you apologise to us one more time...I promise I shall go straight to the police and prefer charges.

JOHN smiles at the kindness.

JOHN

I tend to overdo everything. I'm sorry.

WENDY

There you go again.

HEATHER takes JOHN's arm and they start to walk.

HEATHER

It's the best thing that's happened to her all holiday. My sister has...literary aspirations.

WENDY

Now, Heather...

HEATHER

She will - much against her better judgement - deluge the parish magazine with details of her hours in a Venetian goal.

WENDY

Heather.....

EXT. LANDING STAGE NEAR SISTERS' PENSIONE. NIGHT. contd.

HEATHER

She once submitted an article to the Reader's Digest.

JOHN appears interested.

JOHN

Really?

HEATHER

"The most unforgettable character I have ever met". It was me. They rejected it.

JOHN

Oh. I'm sorry.

HEATHER

It was very badly written.

She sniffs.

WENDY

And who started composing a poem at the police station? "Samson Agonistes in the dark Venetian waters....?

HEATHER

Samson Agonistes was blind. So am I.

WENDY

And there, I would have thought, the parallel ends.

HEATHER sniffs again. They have reached their modest hotel. The large double doors are closed. WENDY fumbles in her bag for the night key.

WENDY

You'll come in, Mr. Baxter? Just for a few moments.

HEATHER

His wife will be arriving at the airport.

EXT. LANDING STAGE NEAR SISTERS' NEW PENSIONE, NIGHT. contd.

WENDY

His wife has not been in a police station for four hours.

She looks at him triumphantly.

JOHN

Just a few moments.

99. INT. HALLWAY OF POLICE STATION. NIGHT.

LAURA waits as ALBERTO talks to the POLICEMAN on duty at the night desk.

LAURA stares at the cold green walls and echoing emptiness of the place. A tiny shiver. [redacted]

[redacted]

He left fifteen minutes ago.
To take the old sisters home.
I have the address here.

He holds up a piece of paper.

ALBERTO

Let's go.

LAURA puts out a hand.

LAURA

Alberto - thank you. You've been so kind.

He stops, perplexed by the change in her tone.

LAURA

I'd like to go there on my own now.
(smiling at him)
John and I have a lot to talk about. Would you understand?

ALBERTO nods, but is about to speak. LAURA puts a delicate hand to his lips to silence him.

LAURA

We'll see you in the morning.
Thank you for everything.

Then she turns and runs out of the vast hallway. ALBERTO looks after her a moment before crumpling the piece of paper with the address and dropping it to the marbled floor.

ALBERTO

He left fifteen minutes ago. To take the two old sisters home. They've moved hotels.

He glances at his watch.

I really don't know if I have time to. . . .

LAURA

Do you have their address?

ALBERTO

Yes, but I have to get back . . .

LAURA

May I have it?

He hands her the bit of paper. She glances at it.

I can manage.

ALBERTO looks ever so slightly ashamed for the first time.

ALBERTO

I'll er . . . have something cold left out for you.

LAURA shakes her head.

LAURA

No. There are still places open and we have a lot to talk about.

She smiles.

And I promise we'll leave tomorrow. We're going on holiday.

Then she turns and runs down the steps of the vast hallway. ALBERTO stares out after her.

100. INT. SISTERS' HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

WENDY is busily searching through the suitcase and drawers for something. JOHN stands uneasily by the door. HEATHER sits in a chair.

WENDY

They're here somewhere....
wee miniatures we got on the
aeroplane.....

JOHN

Well look it doesn't matter.
I've really got to....

WENDY

Ah! Here we are!

HEATHER seems to be breathing slightly harder. She sits bolt upright in the chair, her chest heaving, her eyes moving vacantly from side to side. With a great effort of will she speaks.

HEATHER

Let Mr. Baxter be off, Wendy.
His Wife arrives at any moment
he told you.

WENDY bustles up with a handful of miniature whisky bottles which she presses upon JOHN.

WENDY

Now then, that's just a little
token from two old ladies who've
no doubt ruined your holiday.....

JOHN

Thank you, that's very kind.....

He drops one, scrabbles to pick it up.

WENDY

I'll get you a bag. I've one
somewhere here.

HEATHER gives a sudden groan. WENDY spins round and sees what is happening.

INT. SISTERS' HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. contd.

Foam is dribbling from HEATHER's mouth. Her face is contorted in pain. Once more there is the SOUND of a chill wind whispering through the room. And above the wind the SOUND of a CHILD'S VOICE crying.
JOHN doesn't want to be involved. He backs to the door.

JOHN

It's all right. I can manage....
goodbye.....

WENDY practically ignores him because she has moved round behind her sister and is holding her strangely around the forehead and the shoulders - as one might prepare for an epileptic fit.
JOHN hovers in the doorway. WENDY looks up briefly and smiles.

WENDY

She'll be fine again soon.
Goodbye Mr. Baxter.

And JOHN goes out. The SOUND of the child crying swells up and blends into.....

101. EXT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE SISTERS' ROOM. NIGHT.
A SCREAM of sheer agony emanates from the sisters' room. JOHN closes his eyes and dashes down the staircase as quickly as he can run.

102. EXT. OUTSIDE SISTERS' HOTEL. NIGHT.
JOHN comes out the vast front door and looks left and right before starting to walk away into the dark canal streets beside the hotel.

103. INT. SISTERS' HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.
CLOSE ON HEATHER. Her face is racked with pain; beads of sweat stand on her brow and tears course down her cheeks. Her head is trembling violently. The SOUNDS of the wind and the cries of a child are dim now. HEATHER is in a state of dreadful agitation.

INT. SISTERS' HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. CONTD.

HEATHER

Fetch him back...! Please!
Please! Let him not go.....
not go.....

She suddenly turns savagely on her sister.

HEATHER

Fetch him, woman, fetch him
back. Quickly!

WENDY rises and starts running from the room.

104. EXT. OUTSIDE SISTERS' HOTEL. NIGHT.

The little square is empty as WENDY comes agitatedly out of the front door and looks to left and right. She runs forward, her steps echoing on the cobblestones.

WENDY

(calling)
Mr. Baxter....Mr. Baxter!

But there is no reply. Except the SOUND of footsteps approaching: short sharp footsteps that seem to be running. WENDY is suddenly afraid. She slinks back to the hotel doorway - and peers out once more.

As LAURA comes running into the square.

LAURA is happy - elated - expectant. And as she sees WENDY hovering in the doorway, seeing her, running towards her, LAURA's face breaks into a smile of sheer happiness. But WENDY's violent tug at her sleeve and the tremulous face give LAURA a second's hesitation.

WENDY

Come quickly.

LAURA senses real fear.

LAURA (gasping)

John...is he still here?

WENDY grabs LAURA's arm and propels her almost violently into the hotel.

WENDY

Quickly!

EXT. OUTSIDE SISTERS' HOTEL. NIGHT. contd.

It is all she says as the great door slams behind them.

105. EXT. VENICE BACK STREET. NIGHT.

The streets and canals are utterly deserted. The shadows seem to move as JOHN walks briskly towards a canal bridge. He is slightly lost as can be gathered from his constant reference to the pocket map and checking names of streets in the dimness of the night. There is no sound but his footsteps. Yet somehow the very walls look menacing.

106. INT. SISTERS' PENSIONE ROOM. NIGHT.

As WENDY and LAURA dash into the room HEATHER is struggling, lashing in her chair.

LAURA

Where is he?

LAURA's voice acts instantaneously upon HEATHER who stops all movement quite suddenly and stands upright, her blind eyes staring.

HEATHER

Wendy?

WENDY

It's Mrs. Baxter....I couldn't find him.....

She explains to LAURA.

WENDY

He left - just left - I went to bring him back. I think it's.....

HEATHER

Christine. I saw Christine. Warn him...you must find him. You must....!

LAURA has drawn blood on the hand that she has had to her mouth. She gasps with fright as she takes the bleeding hand from her face.

HEATHER

She told you! She told you! Leave Venice....she told him....

INT. SISTERS' PENSIONE ROOM. NIGHT. contd.

WENDY is moaning. HEATHER shouting. In the hallway outside PEOPLE have begun to complain, calling out for silence, footsteps to investigate the noises.
LAURA turns and flees.

107. INT. CORRIDOR AND STAIRS OF PENSIONE. NIGHT.
LAURA runs blindly away. Away from the echoing, resonating warnings.

LAURA

John....

Is the only word she utters as she runs to find him.

108. EXT. VENICE BACK STREET. NIGHT.
A path runs parallel to a canal on both sides of the canal. Two hundred yards away there is a footbridge and JOHN walks towards this.

109. EXT. VENICE STREET NEAR PENSIONE. NIGHT.
LAURA dashes across the little piazza, searching for her husband.

110. INT. SISTERS' ROOM IN PENSIONE. NIGHT.
WENDY throws open the curtains and peers out.
HEATHER stands in the middle of the room, alert, tenses, as if listening for something.

111. EXT. VENICE BACK STREET. NIGHT.
JOHN slows to a halt as he hears the noise of a door slamming and the crash of breaking glass in the distance. He looks back. There is the SOUND of a child, sobbing. His P.O.V. Across the canal and running towards him on the parallel bank is the CHILD whom he saw the night before. The CHILD is fleeing. A MAN's VOICE shouts in the distance.

In a moment JOHN decides. He dashes forward to the canal edge where a boat lies moored. He pushes the bows off into the centre of the canal to offer a bridge for the CHILD to run over to the safety of his protection.

JOHN

Here! Come here!

EXT. VENICE BACK STREET. NIGHT. contd.

The little CHILD barely pauses in her flight - leaping onto the proffered boat, falling with a cry, scrambling up and throwing herself towards JOHN's waiting hands.
A MAN has now appeared on the far side of the canal and is catching up by running beyond the opposite bank to cross by the bridge.
As the CHILD jumps onto the bank JOHN points to a gateway beyond the alley.

JOHN

In there. Quickly!

He dashes forward and flings open the iron gateway which leads down a narrow passage. The CHILD rushes ahead, her breath coming in racking pants of terror and exhaustion.
JOHN slams the gate behind. He throws two massive bolts into place and clips the padlock, then runs down the passage behind the CHILD.

112. EXT. PASSAGE OFF CANAL. NIGHT.

At the end of the passage there is a sharp right turn. This leads to a tiny open courtyard off which the impenetrable doors of two houses forbid further flight.
As JOHN rounds the corner of the passage he staggers to a halt.
The CHILD is huddled in a dark corner, like a trapped animal, moaning.

JOHN

It's all right. I'm here.
It's all right. You're safe now.

JOHN strides up to the nearest door and raps loudly on it.

JOHN

Hello! Hello!

The MAN who was pursuing the CHILD struggles with the locked gate. It is impenetrable.
JOHN looks back at the pathetic, shivering CHILD.

EXT. PASSAGE OFF CANAL. NIGHT. contd.

JOHN

We'll get help - don't worry.

He pushes at the giant door. And it sags inwards, with a dreadful hollow groan.

The house is abandoned and derelict. The far walls are broken rubble, backing onto another canal.

The CHILD scuttles past the astonished JOHN and dashes into the house. And now there is the SOUND of wind, and the CHILD'S VOICE crying, sobbing, calling.

113. INT. DERELICT HOUSE. NIGHT.

The corridor is dimly lit by the canal overlights beyond. The walls drip green slime. The floorboards are utterly decayed. Rats flee at the intruders' steps.

JOHN walks uneasily down the hallway corridor into the room where the CHILD disappeared. He calls out softly, soothingly.

JOHN

I'm a friend. I won't hurt you. Come on, kid.....

114. INT. ROOM OF DERELICT HOUSE. NIGHT.

As JOHN pushes the door gently forward and peers into the room, he sees the CHILD standing stockstill, her back to him. JOHN reaches out a hand for comfort. The CHILD's cry reaches a crescendo.

The CHILD TURNS and throws back her hood.

She is no child but a hideously misshapen dwarf. A WOMAN with a great deformed head, dirty grey hair falling out and powerful shoulders. And she isn't sobbing. The sounds are caused by her natural breathing through a twisted mouth and disfigured nose.

QUICK CUT TO:

115. EXT. CANAL STREET. NIGHT.

LAURA running, sobbing. Ahead she can see a small cluster of POLICE fanning out in an encircling operation.

QUICK CUT TO:

116. INT. SISTERS' PENSIONS ROOM. NIGHT.

HEATHER quivers in a trance state, her blue eyes staring.

117. INT. ROOM OF DERELICT HOUSE. NIGHT.

JOHN's face shows horror, then fear.

The DWARF slowly takes her hand from her sleeve. She is holding a great butchers knife which glints as she raises it. Her face breaks in an appalling grin of anticipation.

JOHN stumbles backwards, his head shaking slowly in disbelief.

The DWARF leaps with a scream of vindictive triumph.

The butchers knife is buried in JOHN's throat.

QUICK CUT TO:

118. INT. SISTERS' PENSIONS ROOM. NIGHT.

HEATHER emits the most piercing and horrific scream. She can see JOHN's death.

QUICK CUT TO:

119. INT. ROOM OF DERELICT HOUSE. NIGHT.

LAURA, still searching, still running as she stares about at the furious POLICE activity everywhere. When she speaks it is a prayer.

LAURA

John....darling...

CUT TO:

120. EXT. GRAND CANAL. DAY.

An identical SHOT OF LAURA riding on a vaporetto between the TWO SISTERS. It is the same exact shot as JOHN saw. HOLD for a moment. Then the CAMERA MOVES OUT to reveal that the vaporetto is a funeral launch. The coffin with JOHN's body is on a trestle. It is heaped with the most beautiful flowers.

LAURA stumbles in her grief. WENDY holds her gently.

- END -